

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

# *Horizon*

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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VELIST-PHILOSOPHERS—IX. R. L. STEVENSON AND G. D. BROWN:  
THE MYTH OF LORD BRAXFIELD. BY J. D. SCOTT

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF PAUL VALÉRY. BY DOROTHY BUSSY

A LETTER ABOUT ARCHITECTURE. BY E. MAXWELL FRY

SAMUEL PALMER'S FRIENDS. BY GEOFFREY GRIGSON

SIGN AND FUNCTION IN TYPOGRAPHY. BY HOLBROOK JACKSON

• PORTRAIT OF A TOWN. BY BERNARD GUTTERIDGE

POEMS BY OLIVIER LARRONDE

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Vol. XIII No. 77 May 1946

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The editorial and publishing Offices of HORIZON are at 6 Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, W.C.1.—Six months' subscription, 12/6 net, including postage; U.S.A.—\$3.25 (\$6.00 per annum); France—70 francs per copy. Agents for U.S.A.: Gotham Book Mart, 51 West 47th Street, New York City; Canada: The Jonathan David Co., P.O. Box 204, Station H, Montreal, 25. For advertising terms please write to The Business Manager, Terminus 4898

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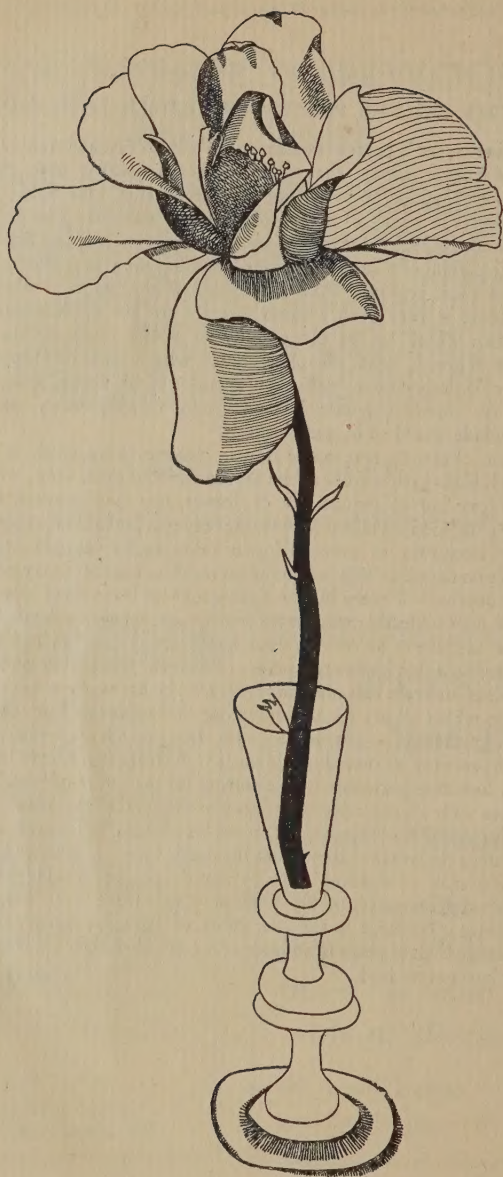


## A NOTE ON THE POETRY OF OLIVIER LARRONDE

OLIVIER LARRONDE's poetry resumes one of the noblest and most authentic traditions of French poetry, that of the sixteenth century, more especially the tradition of Maurice Scève and of Jean de Sponde. Like Scève, Olivier Larronde believes in a kind of poetry which is hermetic, like Jean de Sponde he has a taste for analogies, metaphors and elaborate conceits, and like both of them he is not afraid of a certain preciousness. Among the young poets of today there is none more removed from nature, less negligent, in a word, more elaborate. There is none with a closer concern for the implications of the language from which his art proceeds. What a sure touch he has in the management of words, what disciplined grace, what a sense of proportion in his method of ordering them within the structure of his poems. Every one of the poems of Olivier Larronde is a wonderful word-assembly wherein is enclosed a whole world of limpid harmony.

There is no obviously perceptible human element in his work, it is not a poetry which lends itself readily to the human development. One can find no mention of love nor of anguish nor of despair, nor does emotion make its appearance in his poetry which is answerable only to a poetical necessity, even as the elements, trees, ruins, or human beings in a Poussin, for example, correspond only to a plastic demand. This by no means implies that the poetry of Olivier Larronde is deprived of every human feeling and dissipates itself gratuitously. A line of the poet perfectly expresses his poetical art, *La muse y fait un jeu de ma flexible peine*. If there is playfulness there is suffering behind it. The secret of Olivier Larronde is that he remains master of himself. Even while he is experiencing the least abstract emotions and torments, he knows how to keep them at a distance which allows for the flowering of the work of art. After five years of 'responsibilities', years, let us face it, from which poetry has emerged singularly deprived of its own intrinsic quality, even though it may have been enriched by human experiences, it is reassuring for the future of French poetry to see a poet with a precocious and disconcerting authority, make it sparkle with that purity of which it has been deprived for too long. That alone would be enough to merit the strictest attention to the poetic future of Olivier Larronde, if this young man of eighteen did not already possess in addition a most precious gift and the rarest of all, without which there is no true poetry, that of creating a language in the very heart of language itself, the art of carrying words to their point of incandescence at which they are transformed and flower into poetry itself.

HENRI HELL





OLIVIER LARRONDE  
SOIGNER SES ROSES

Son incroyable armure a dégrafé la rose  
Au reste jamais nue. Dénouer la ceinture  
A cette fleur serait vanité. Qu'on l'arrose  
De diamants. La beauté comme un voile de nue  
S'étend comme une main travaillant par derrière  
(Les objets souriants ont aussi leur mystère),  
N'abandonnant ici ce que rose l'on nomme  
Que pour faire agiter ses ailes une fleur.  
Nous laisserait-on voir plutôt qu'un miroir vide  
Ces objets malheureux qu'une beauté transforme.

Je crains moins les barreaux que la cage de l'ombre,  
Que les dentelles d'ombre, écriture et langage  
Des anges dissipés. Cette tache suspecte  
Entre toutes—forcé de lui donner en gage  
Mon cœur comme un cœur d'arbre aux ombres familier—  
Me zèbre, me flétrit et me prend mes trésors  
Utiles. De chez moi balaie ce décombre,  
Beau soleil! Je sais mal dans l'ombre qui m'encage  
Me servir de mon corps épineux: ce tangage  
Le montre assez, cette démarche de centaure.

Je voudrais y frotter, ce tronc de mousse ombreux  
Le mien d'ombre moussu, mettre dans tes pieds nus  
Mes pieds d'ombre chaussés, moins bien entretenus.  
Tête en bas, tête en l'air dans ma cage interlope,  
Arbre, je veux tenir sur mes pieds tachés d'ombre.  
Peau rouge ta beauté tes membres enveloppe.  
Portique de muse aux accessoires nombreux,  
La muse y fait un jeu de ma flexible peine.  
Rose n'est jamais nue, cher ami vieillissant,  
N'abandonnons la route où les roses reviennent.

Poète jalouxant, jeune rose établie,  
Cette tige sans voir l'aurore surprenante  
—Sa main de blanchisseuse à vous nouer s'attarde—

Mes yeux sont mal pliés par contre, au saut du lit,  
 Votre service est fait. Si la beauté se noue,  
 Quel nœud vous faites! Fleur mettez-vous à la place  
 D'un poète noué: pleurez vos sœurs coupées.  
 Pour être déchaîné, c'est, douloureuse grâce,  
 Mal plié, mal frisé, bien cher, je voudrais prendre  
 Tige, peut-être l'aube aurait pour moi des soins.

Ce rire différent dans ce peignoir de nue,  
 Pourquoi m'en étonner, fausse fleur demi-nue  
 Sous l'orage—Abruti, tu nous montres ta tête  
 Rose, orage tête-roses. Soignez vos roses  
 Congestionnées: la rose en cas de rage mord!  
 Incroyable destin d'un garçon de Paris,  
 Flétrissant, qu'en penser cornu soleil sans tige,  
 Ce garçon écorché, d'arbre et rose chéri.  
 Sur le cou du soir nu qui essaie des pauses.  
 Il tue les courants d'air et les drapeaux en lutte.

## GELÉE BLANCHE

Neiges de deux hivers ne se reconnaîtraient  
 Ni vous ne figerez les plis de mon eau froide,  
 Gel du poème, ou son fouillis ne ferez roide.  
 —Plus que de l'épervier les demeures m'effraient,

Quand l'aurore me donne à sa serre féline,  
 Plus l'indiscret oiseau dont je suis la volière:  
 Mésange, cœur de fraise, aux tortures encline  
 Qui me met en morceaux comme on casse les œufs.

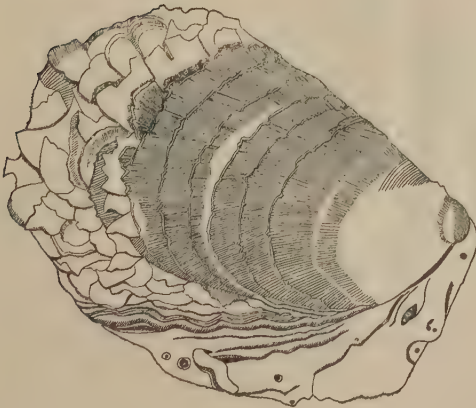
## PERCHOIRS

Tes pieds gelés déforment mon image,  
S'use ma bouche (à tes pieds de statue)  
Y nidifient ceux qu'oublia la mer,  
Les dénichent, miroirs aux coquillages.

Chagrins d'un coquillage. La marine  
Salive abuse une étrange acoustique  
Jusqu'à mousser, pour embellir la ruche  
Du parasite—aussi crèche des perles.

(Neige, tes seins la proie de) mes coquilles,  
Tu comptais bien les captiver, coquette  
En travesti d'un arbrisseau marin.  
Ces pendentifs ont une autre musique,

La bouche morte ailleurs se posera.





# NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS-IX

## R. L. STEVENSON AND G. D. BROWN

### THE MYTH OF LORD BRAXFIELD

J. D. SCOTT

IT was in 1832 that Sir Walter Scott died. Everything about him had been on an heroic scale; if he averted his eyes from reality, it was sixty years before any Scottish writer dared so much as to glance at it. Even during Scott's lifetime, Francis Jeffrey, in a review of Galt's novels in the *Edinburgh Review*, noted this influence—'The author of the *Parish Annals* seems to have sought chiefly to rival the humorous and less dignified parts of his original . . . with traits of sly and sarcastic sagacity, and occasionally softened and relieved by touches of unexpected tenderness and simple pathos'. How well the reader of Galt learns to know these touches, and how he winces from them: they are what prevent a serious comparison of *The Entail* with, shall we say, *César Birotteau*. Yet *The Entail* is a considerable novel, the rather terrible story of an old man's obsession about money and land, with its streak of genuine and moving fantasy, and its *genre*, its picture of a kind of life which had good qualities, and which no longer exists. We see the same picture in Scott but in all Galt's novels except *The Entail* it is obscured by the 'touches', and after 1832 the national inspiration failed altogether. For more than sixty years, sixty years that saw the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *L'Education Sentimentale*, of *Middlemarch*, and *Erewhon*, of *On the Eve* and *The Idiot*, of *Leaves of Grass* and *Daisy Miller*, and of *The Origin of Species* and *Das Kapital*, no Scottish writer attempted to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race. The country of Dunbar and Burns was silent.

It was not until the end of the century that the silence was broken. It was in 1893 that Stevenson's last, unfinished novel, *Weir of Hermiston*, was published. Eight years later, George

Douglas Brown, a young Scot living as a journalist in London, published *The House with the Green Shutters*. A year later, he too was dead. These two novels, *Weir of Hermiston* and *The House with the Green Shutters*, have certain claims to greatness; it is the nature and the strength of these claims that I propose to examine.

Before going on with our attempt to assess the qualities of the two novels it may be as well to recall their salient features. *Weir* is the more obviously 'historical', being set in 1813. Lord Hermiston is a Judge, a Hanging Judge, learned, incorruptible, merciless, and a coarse old brute into the bargain. His wife is a gentle, foolish, characterless woman, and their son combines his parents' good qualities—his father's honesty, and perhaps something of his ability, with his mother's gentleness of nature. Archie Weir finds his father disgusting and incomprehensible, and never more so than when he is present at the trial for murder of a wretched creature called Duncan Jopp. His father's coarse ribaldry on this occasion drives Archie to make a public protest. This is an action as incomprehensible to the Lord Justice Clerk as his own behaviour is to his son, and Archie is exiled to Hermiston, the estate which was his mother's dowry. Here Archie falls in love with the daughter of a tenant—Christina. But an uninvited guest, a scapegrace friend of Archie's who is cadging hospitality, seduces the girl. Here Stevenson's MS. ends. We know, however, that it was planned that Archie should quarrel with and murder the seducer. Then, if the legal difficulties could be got round, Hermiston was, if not perhaps to try, at least to have some responsibility in punishing his son's crime. It is, at any rate, clear that the climax of the novel was to be the clash in Hermiston's mind between his self-dedication to the administration of justice and his love for his son. With what outcome the book would end we do not know.

Like *Weir*, the *House* is also an historical novel. This is a point frequently overlooked. The book was written in the late 'nineties, and it concerns the 'fifties. The importance of the fact that both novels are historical will be referred to later. When the book opens, James Gourlay is a successful carrier, a man feared and hated by the village of Barbie. In his sphere he is as domineering, as brutal, and as upright as Hermiston in his. But he is stupid: at least he is devoid of pushing commercial shrewdness. In the upheavals caused by railway construction and the new ways

that come with it, he cannot hold his own with a meaner, smaller, but much more clever rival. His business goes down hill, and he looks to his son to maintain his failing prestige. It is a hope not likely to be rewarded. Young Gourlay is a poor specimen, timid, vain, spoilt by his mother, and idle. His one stroke of success, the winning of an important University essay prize (a matter of great note in a Scottish village) is due not to industry and academic ability, but to a streak of poetry in an otherwise commonplace character. He is, in fact, morbidly imaginative. Flushed by success, but aware that he cannot maintain it, he takes to drink. Drink and vanity drive him to an escapade which brings about his expulsion from the University. He comes home—home to his silly besotted mother, and his father, now harried, bankrupt and dangerous. At the climax of an insane outburst of bullying young Gourlay defends himself with a poker, and kills his father. Thereafter he drinks himself into delirium tremens and is given poison by his mother, who then commits suicide. So much for the plots of *Weir of Hermiston* and *The House with the Green Shutters*.

These were the novels which broke the silence. Coming shortly after one another and both written by exiles shortly before their death, they might attract comparison on these grounds alone. Such a comparison will bring to light similarities, not perhaps striking, if only because of the differences of background, but similarities which assume a significance and eventually rise above the differences. Both novels are concerned with the conflict between a dominating father and a weak son, and in each case the son is supported by an adoring mother. Such a theme of course is the material of innumerable novels, and does not take us very far. With the resemblance between Mrs. Gourlay and Mrs. Weir, however, we leave the general for the particular.

Miss Richmond of Tenshillingland and Miss Rutherford of Hermiston brought nothing to their husbands save social superiority and money, although what they bring—the capital to build up Gourlay's business, and the title of Hermiston for Weir—make a certain contribution to the nature of the men as they are revealed to us. What the women lack, however, is more important. Mrs. Weir 'came to her maturity depressed, and, as it were, defaced; no blood of life in her, no grasp or gaiety; pious, anxious, tender, tearful and incompetent'. With the word 'pious'



omitted this would be an exact description of Mrs. Gourlay. It is interesting to note how both Stevenson and Brown, in their pictures of these two unhappy women, find, in the 'shrewd, character-reading' Scottish dialect, the same kind of telling, expressive phrase. Mrs. Weir is a 'feckless wife', 'a fushionless quean, a feckless carline', Mrs. Gourlay a 'dishclout of a woman' and a 'thouless trauchle'. Their ultimate fate, too, is similar: in both cases the tension of an unsuitable marriage is so great that it unhinges their minds. The similarity between the two novels, the cause of which I propose to examine, does not end there. It is, perhaps, rather tenuous in the case of Archie Weir and young Gourlay, yet surely they have qualities, as well as a dramatic purpose, in common, if only that they are both, by comparison with their fathers, gentle and sensitive. Archie Weir is, of course, a better man than young Gourlay, just as Hermiston is a bigger man than Gourlay. What is interesting is that one should be able to say that Hermiston is a bigger man than Gourlay. It implies some resemblance, and in fact, the more one looks at them, the brutal stupid carrier, and the Hanging Judge, the more one sees they are the same, that Hermiston is a kind of Gourlay writ large. This is a point to be pursued, but I propose to pursue it indirectly, by looking behind the character of Hermiston at the original upon which Stevenson modelled him, at the archetypal figure of Lord Justice Clerk Braxfield.

Robert MacQueen of Braxfield in Lanarkshire was born in 1722. His grandfather had been a gardener, but his father became a Writer and prospered. His mother also was Lanarkshire born, a Hamilton of Gilkerscleugh. The importance of this countryside in Scottish literature is considerable. Ochiltree, the birthplace of George Douglas Brown and the part-original of his 'Barbie', is on the Ayrshire side of it, and the 'Kittlestonheugh' of Galt's *Entail* on the Lanarkshire side. Auchinleck, the home of the Boswells, is not far from Ochiltree. This is the country of the Covenanters, whose memorials Old Mortality tended, and one of which plays a part in *Weir*. The scenery is varied, the wide infertile moors being channelled by pastoral valleys, but the history is more uniform, a history of violence. Lord Braxfield rose out of this countryside like an embodiment of its past.

He became an advocate, specializing in feudal law, and was raised to the Bench at the age of forty-four, becoming a Lord of

Justiciary in succession to Lord Auchinleck, and, finally, in 1788, Lord Justice Clerk. Braxfield was noted for his force of character, his intellectual ability, and his scandalous *obiter dicta*. He was, of course, a Tory (it was the era of the Dundas hegemony), and when in 1793-4 he presided over the trials for sedition of Muir and others he became notorious for the brutality which he displayed. He is described in Cockburn's *Memorials of His Time*—'Strong built and dark, with rough eyebrows, powerful eyes, threatening lips, and a low growling voice, he was like a formidable blacksmith. His accent and his dialect were exaggerated Scotch; his language, like his thoughts, short, strong and conclusive.' As a lawyer and particularly 'within the range of the Feudal and the Civil branches, and in every matter depending on natural ability and practical sense, he was very great; and his power arose more from the force of his reasoning and his vigorous application of principle, than from either the extent or the accuracy of his learning. I have heard good observers describe with admiration how, having worked out a principle, he followed it in its application, fearlessly and triumphantly, dashing all unworthy obstructions aside, and pushed on to his result with the vigour and disdain of a consummate athlete. And he had a colloquial way of arguing, in the form of question and answer, which, done in his clear abrupt style, imparted a dramatic directness and vivacity to the scene.'

A great number of anecdotes about him were long preserved in oral tradition, but I fear that only a few of those which are called 'printable' have survived. Of these the most famous is that which is told in Lockhart's *Life of Scott* of Braxfield's remark to a prisoner at the bar who had made an eloquent plea in his own defence—'Ye're a vera clever chiel, man, but ye wad be nane the waur o' a hanging'. Another was told in the first edition of Lockhart's *Life*, of Braxfield trying at Dumfries, for forgery, a man named Matthew Hay with whom he had been accustomed to play chess. Upon a verdict of Guilty being brought in, Braxfield is reported to have exclaimed, 'That's checkmate to you, Matthew!' The correct version, according to Cockburn, is that the judge was Lord Kames, the circuit town Ayr, and the crime murder, but the point is not which Judge made the remark, it would not matter even if it was never made—it could be told as a convincing anecdote about more than one of the Fifteen. It

is, however, well authenticated that in the course of one of the sedition trials the prisoner made the point that all great men had been reformers—‘even our Saviour Himself’. Braxfield’s reply, delivered, no doubt, with what Lockhart describes as his ‘grin of ineffable sagacity, derision, and coarse, uncontrollable humour,’ was amongst his best—‘Muckle He made o’that—I he was hanget’. (The Lord Justice Clerk disdained reference to any judicial punishment other than the maximum, and that inflicted in accordance with the law of Scotland.)

I am not, of course, trying to defend Braxfield as an historic character. In the hands of a reactionary government he was an admirable weapon of oppression, although, even so, his lack of hypocrisy was embarrassing. ‘A government in every country’, he informed the jury in the trial of Muir, ‘should be just like a corporation; and in this country, it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented. As for the rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the country on them? What security for the payment of their taxes? They may pack up all their property on their backs, and leave the country in the twinkling of an eye. But landed property cannot be removed.’ On the other hand, although he was brutal, he was not cruel in the ordinary sense of the word: his brutality being due to what Cockburn, in a well-considered phrase, calls his ‘cherished coarseness’.

Personally, I entertain the hope that the Braxfield stories survive, in the manuscript, perhaps, in which some young advocate recorded them, or else holding together the last tags of the Civil Law and dim reflections of passion and violence in the memory of some old Writer to the Signet. For the roots of the Braxfield stories are deep in the soil of Scotland, and stories having the Braxfield touch are innumerable. To put the matter briefly, it is the reaction of a Scot to these stories which is the equivalent of what an Englishman calls his sense of humour. I have said that the stories are innumerable. There is, for instance, to take an example from a profession other than the law, the story of the minister who told his congregation that in a dream he had seen them all in Hell suffering the tortures of the damned. ‘Ye lifted up your eyes to Almighty God and ye said unto Him “Oh Lord, we didna ken it would be like this”’. And the Lord God Almighty, (slowly and unctuously) in His infinite mercy and compassion,



looked down upon ye and He said (à la Braxfield), "Weel, noo ye ken".

In analysing the national character of which these stories are a reflection, there are certain elementary facts which must be borne in mind. The geographical situation of Scotland is such that life is a harder struggle, than, for instance, in Dorset or the valley of the Seine. The life that is lived there is the hard life of all inhospitable Northern lands, and we need look no further for the origin of the dour, thrawn quality which is commonly supposed to be predominant. There is also, however, present in this character a strain—I do not seek to explain it—perhaps it is Highland—which is gay, vain, gracious and fantastical. No one would pretend, of course, that this quality either is peculiarly Scottish, although it does occasionally occur in some purity. Stevenson's Alan Breck Stewart is an example of one aspect of it, the sweet naturedness of it appears in Scott himself, and another aspect appeared in Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromartie, the translator of Rabelais, who died in a fit of laughter on hearing of the Restoration of Charles II. What is, I think, to some extent peculiar to Scotland is the presence of these two very different qualities in what we call 'one person'. It is a fusion, or it might be more accurate to say, a clash between them, which is at the root of the Braxfield touch.

Braxfield died in 1799, and fifty years after his death Cockburn wrote: 'His very name makes people start yet'. One cannot wonder that it made them start, for a character more antipathetic to the trend of social history in Scotland in the nineteenth century it would be hard to imagine. Earthy, bawdy, profane, and at the same time under the compulsion of some obscure demoniac possession: it was best to suppress him and all that he represented, to keep him locked up and hope he would be forgotten. He was decidedly *not* one of the things that 'blooms in our kail-yard', and there was no place for him in the Scotland which was coming into being in the years following his death, the Scotland in which Stevenson was born and grew up. This was a very fine specimen, a laboratory specimen, of bourgeois society, and Mr. Edwin Muir, in a brilliant essay, has indicated its effects on Stevenson. Such a society, passionate in its suppression of truth, can hardly permit the existence of a serious writer, but it is prepared to allow certain writers, those whose conception of

themselves as light entertainers precludes any unfortunate pre-occupations with reality, to exist under licence.

This was the society with which Stevenson had to come to terms, both as represented by his public and more immediately by his family. The story of his life is well known, and I need not go into it in any detail. His ambition to be a writer dated from an early age, while his family wished him to follow their tradition and become a civil engineer. A compromise was arranged whereby he was to become a lawyer, but although he was duly called to the Bar, he never practised. He wrote instead. His family were puzzled, offended, admiring and kind, determined to 'understand'. It was a very dreadful situation—degenerate Presbyterianism in the background and an understanding family in the foreground. How could Stevenson help being a 'success'?—success must have appeared as the only tolerable solution, and the price of success was acquiescence in the role of a light entertainer.

All that is fairly certain is that Stevenson spent years in the composition of a great deal of *belles-lettres*, now very stale, and some remarkable *tours-de-force*. He was elegant, high spirited, brilliant; he learned to do quite astonishing tricks with his talent. He became in his own words, 'a distinguished litterytour' and as such he still has a reputation. And as he wrote, he lived, with his black shirt and his charm, pursued by his family with their offers of trips to Paris (accepted), an allowance of £250 a year (accepted) and their terrible understanding (accepted too). And all the time there was going on a bitter, obscure struggle, like the underground warfare in one of those countries about which most of the news is kept out of the papers, and one doesn't quite know who represents what.

Our knowledge of this is gathered largely by inference from the quality of the writing in *Weir*. It is the story of the effort and devotion with which he worked to throw off his success. He worked at this as men work at the boring of an oil-well, and when he struck oil the distinguished 'litterytour' was blown sky-high, as an oil-well sometimes blows its scaffolding. In Stevenson's account of Hermiston there is, to quote his own words about the trial of Duncan Jopp, 'a light and heat and detonation' as well as a profound seriousness, that seriousness which, according to Gerard Manley Hopkins, comes of an artist's 'being in earnest

with his subject, reality'. For Stevenson, reality was represented by Scotland. 'Indeed,' wrote Henry James, 'the colour of Scotland has entered into him altogether, and though, oddly enough, he has written but little about his native country, his happiest work shows, I think, that she has the best of his ability, the best of his ambition.' It was a sufficiently restrained comment on Stevenson's long flight from the problem of being Scottish, from the earthiness and the terrible gaiety of Lord Braxfield. Yet eventually it was what I have called the myth of Lord Braxfield which enabled Stevenson to liberate his talent, and in the words of Joyce, which I have already quoted, to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race. In a letter written while he was at work on the novel he says: 'It is pretty Scotch; the grand premier is taken from Braxfield . . . mind you I expect "The Justice-Clerk"<sup>1</sup> to be my masterpiece. My Braxfield is already a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, and so far as he has gone, by far my best character.'

The book is permeated by the myth of Lord Braxfield, even in those passages in which Hermiston does not appear. The vengeance of the four Elliott brothers for the death of their father is an instance. One of the murderers, lying wounded in the darkness, cries out for help, and Hob sees 'the whiteness of the teeth in the man's face. "Damn you," says he, "ye hae your teeth, hae ye?" and rode his horse to and fro upon that human remnant.'

There is something about this, as about Hermiston, for which the most appropriate word is 'demoniac'. I have already used the word of Braxfield, and it is the word used by George Douglas Brown in describing Gourlay. It is this quality of the demoniac which Gourlay has in common with Hermiston, and which is the foundation of the resemblance between the two novels. This is seen most clearly in the scene towards the end of the *House*, the penultimate interview between Gourlay and his son. It is impossible to read this scene and not to be struck by its resemblance to the trial of Duncan Jopp—not to feel that Brown, like Stevenson, is inspired by the myth of Lord Braxfield. If Hermiston has his 'hanging face' Gourlay has his 'glower'. So there is Gourlay's 'slow and vicious enjoyment' in place of Hermiston's 'monstrous relishing gaiety', and 'devilish

<sup>1</sup>A provisional title.



merriment' in place of 'formidable and ferocious scorn'. In the light of the effective identity of Gourlay and Hermiston, the general similarity of the other characters is revealed as merely consequential. Both novels may be considered as attempts to realize the demoniac quality of the national character, to unfasten the bonds of religion, respectability, sentimentality and success, which hold it down, to find out what the Scot—the minister, the Edinburgh lawyer, the city financier, and the chief engineer—really is. Stevenson made a better job of it, more explicit and never irrelevant, his is the novel of the demoniac in action, the release of the authentic and suppressed.

Compared to this, Brown fumbles. He is writing simultaneously about Scotland *embourgeoisé*—Presbyterian, respectable, back-biting, full of ability and success, and the Scotland of Braxfield, the repressed, forgotten, demoniac Scotland. About the former he writes some excellent comedy, writing explicitly, with witty interjections to the reader: it is about the latter that he writes the half of the novel which so strongly resembles *Weir*. And it is in this connection that it is interesting to note that Brown is writing of a period before the railways had really opened up rural Scotland. For Gourlay, like Hermiston, is a character who belongs to a period of history. It is fairly clear that Gourlay could flourish only in a Scotland which had passed out of existence before Brown himself was born. The Scotland that made Stevenson a literary arriviste and which tried to make Brown into, shall we say, a Judge in India?—had no use for Gourlay. Gourlay is pushed out of the way by the commercial trickster and the careerist. In the same way the actual historic Braxfield might have been pushed out of the way by the Government in London if his position as a Judge had not been unassailable. The Braxfield type lacks the essential hypocrisy of the nineteenth-century Scotland. That Brown fails to make clear the historical nature of this process of suppression is, I think, the fundamental defect of his novel.

This defect does not, of course, despite its results, ruin the novel. The virtues of the *House* are very evident. There is a splendid grind and clash of character. One has only to read the first few paragraphs to be struck by the accuracy of Brown's observation of physical phenomena: gradually we learn that his insight into character, while it is imaginative and compassionate,

is no less accurate. Brown's prose, vigorous, clear, and yet intense, can range, unobtrusive and compelling, from the low comedy of the 'bodies' to the almost electric shock of Gourlay's personality.

The *idée reçue* about the *House* is that it is overbalanced by gloom and squalor. This was the criticism made by Andrew Lang when the novel was first published, and it has been faithfully followed. Thus, according to Mr. J. B. Priestley (in a somewhat unfortunate phrase in his otherwise admirable Introduction to the Travellers' Library edition) Brown 'worked . . . hard keeping out the jolly bits', while Mr. Somerset Maugham, in his patronizing and largely irrelevant Introduction to the World's Classics edition, says, 'There is not a single character in his novel who is not base, cruel, mean, drunken, or stupid'. There are, in fact, quite a number of characters who are none of these things—Johnny Coc, Tam Wylie, the Baker, Tarmillan, Irrendavie, 'Thomas Aquinas'. It is Tam Wylie, for instance, who, with the voice of human decency, ushers out the most malignant of the 'bodies'—

"Deacon Allardyce, your heart's black-rotten", he said at last.

'The Deacon blinked and was silent. Tam had summed him up. There was no appeal.'

Jock Allan's circle in Edinburgh, and the University, do, I think, represent—to accept Mr. Priestley's phrase—'the jolly bits'. Only, of course, they are not English jolly bits. And even in Barbie, one must remember, the malignity of the bodies is not gratuitous—'It was one of the evils caused by Gourlay's black pride that it perverted a dozen characters. "The bodies" of Barbie may have been decent enough men in their own way, but against him their malevolence was monstrous.' Indeed, given Gourlay, one feels the bodies might have been worse.

I am not trying to make out that the *House* is a light comedy, although, as I have indicated, there is good comedy in it, shrewdly observed comedy of character, but it remains, when all is said, harsh and gloomy in its general tone. My point is that the harshness and gloom are provided with an adequate artistic balance. They are not uncontrolled.

The fault I have to find is another. Consider the following passage ' . . . young Gourlay felt that leaving Barbie for good would be a cutting of his heart-strings . . . In a land like Barbie,

of quick hill and dale, of tumbled wood and fell, each facet of Nature has an individuality so separate and strong that if you live with it a little it becomes your friend, and a memory so dear that you kiss the thought of it in absence.' And again, 'Was there ever a Cross like Barbie Cross? Was there ever a burn like the Lintie?' They are the only passages of their kind in the book, and I feel that in them Brown said either too much or too little. They must be read in conjunction with his interjection on Jock Allan—'a sentimentalist, of course—he was Scotch'. What Scotland is this, the reader might ask, that we have strayed into, in which we must be provided with heart-strings? And the answer is, of course, that it is the other Scotland, a Scotland 'softened and relieved by touches of unexpected tenderness and simple pathos', which is also the Scotland of 'success', which in Brown's case consisted in spending several years at Oxford, years which he—a little too old and too poor, and already tired of academic life—always considered to have been wasted. Although Brown was born in 1869, it was not until he left Oxford in the summer of 1895 that he managed to stop being a success, and from then until his death some years later, he was a recalcitrant, living by casual journalism, refusing jobs, sneering, drinking and writing the *House*.

There is thus something peculiarly jarring about this sentimentality in the *House*, and it is not the only thing that is false. All the drama—all the 'big scenes'—tend to be a bit overdone. There is a decided straining for effect. This in turn makes the comedy seem flat and displeasing, and the author's interjections tiresome. It is not the sordidness, therefore, which I think Brown fails to balance, but the emotionalism. And, as I suggest, this failure arises from his inability to see the full implications of the suppression of Braxfield's Scotland.

Note the absence of any trace of sentimentality in *Weir*. One might look for it, if anywhere, in Stevenson's treatment of Christina, but Christina is portrayed so calmly, so gently, almost mockingly, and at the same time her sheer sexuality is realized with astonishing brilliance. There is a mature compassion which excludes the possibility of sentimentality.

Brown does not equal Stevenson's achievement, yet with all its faults the impression with which the *House* leaves us, is that its author has produced an important novel. Even if we say

Gourlay is overdone, we do not easily forget him, and many a Scot who has read the book has felt a rather disturbing consciousness of a strain within himself that is neither douce nor canny.

We are not all Scottish; but this novel which is, like *Weir*, 'pretty Scotch' is not parochial. Indeed, when it is most Scottish it is almost universal. And if we look from the novel itself to the man who wrote it and the circumstances in which it was written, we find that the forces which are hostile to art are universal too. The sons of affluent families are everywhere, even now, finding that they have accepted understanding and subsidies, the sons of poor farmers may soon again be winning exhibitions to Balliol. If we are successful in delivering ourselves from the man who reached for his revolver when he heard the word culture, we must still keep an eye on the weapons for which the bourgeoisie reach when they become aware of creative talent. If these weapons are more subtle and less dangerous than the revolver, the literary careers of Scott, Galt, Brown and Stevenson, show that they can be very dangerous indeed.

DOROTHY BUSSY

## SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF PAUL VALÉRY

THESE few recollections of Paul Valéry will perhaps seem unsuited to the personage of such a profound thinker as Valéry undoubtedly was, but they may give an aspect of him which, however slight and superficial, may yet show some of his fundamental characteristics and deepest convictions.

He was at ease with us (probably with everyone), generally gay, always spontaneous and natural, never caring to hide his humours, giving way unaffectedly to his fancies and absurdities. If one asked him a question, he answered readily, and one felt he answered the truth without disguise and with no other motive than sheer love of truth—swayed neither by self-interest nor self-respect, nor indeed by any sort of respect, whether for persons



or opinions, impelled by his whole nature, in small things and great, to look truth unflinchingly in the face, to follow it wherever it might lead, with a courage that to most men seems almost superhuman.

In his talks with us he touched superficially on things he discussed more profoundly in his writings. But he adapted himself to his listeners and the subject he returned to most willingly (in spite of his laughing declaration that he never thought of poetry) was, if not poetry, then language.

His constant dwelling on the *technical* side of poetry, on the details of *métier*, on the importance of composition, all form part of the great theory that lay at the bottom of his teaching: The *method* that gives a man the power to produce a work is what matters and not the work itself.

I first met Paul Valéry a great many years ago (I forget the exact date) at Madame Muhlfeldt's, where he was in the habit of looking in about 6 o'clock in the evening when his work with M. Lebey of the Agence Havas was over. It was André Gide who introduced me to this very select Parisian *salon*. On that day there were only four or five *habitués* present—all men of distinction (among them were M. Louis Artus and young M. François Mauriac, then at the beginning of his career). I was the only woman and the only undistinguished person there. Mme. Muhlfeldt received her guests lying, like a beautiful sea-lion, on her couch. Valéry was the last to come in. To the general public he was then little more than a name, round which a mysterious legend was accruing of the extraordinary esteem in which he was held by a few of his most important contemporaries.

Two little works of his—*Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci* and *Une soirée avec M. Teste*—had, it is true, appeared some twenty years earlier, but they were very short and very abstruse, and when the publication of *Charmes* and *La Jeune Parque* achieved for him the reputation that enabled him to stand for the French Academy, many of the immortal forty had scarcely heard the new candidate's name and still less read his works.

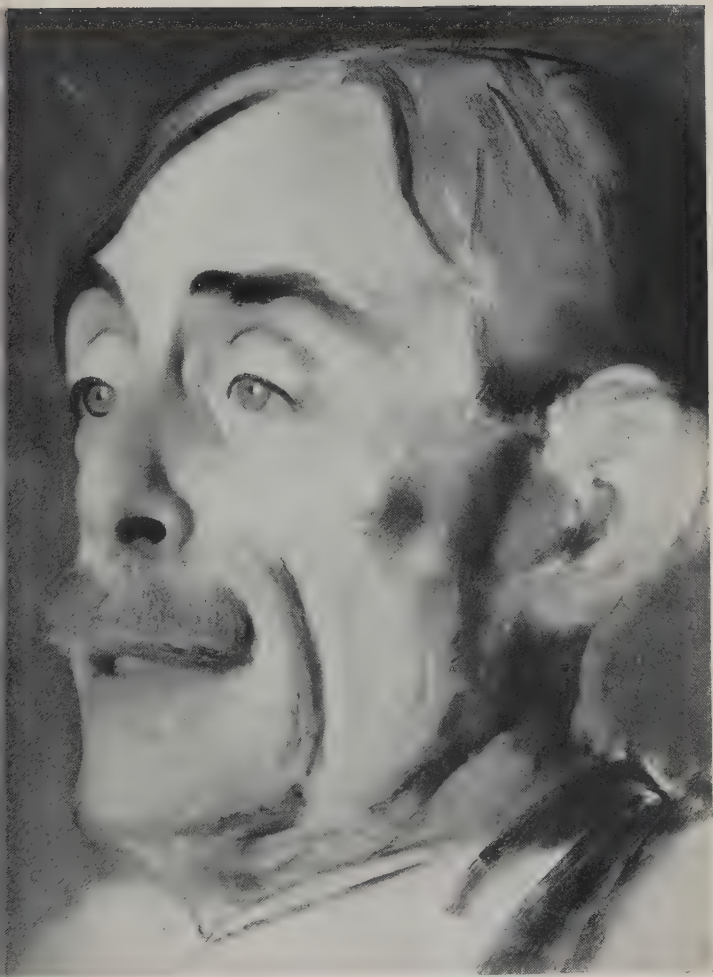
That evening I had my first impression of Valéry—not a conspicuous figure, but unostentatiously elegant, with a perfectly natural ease, distinction and grace. He began to talk as

soon as he came into the room and everyone listened. There was nothing dictatorial about his talk. I remember he described a lecture he had attended at Montpellier University. The lecturer—a doctor—was speaking of some obscure and mortal disease. Beside him, on the platform, as a living illustration, there stood, stripped to the waist, a poor man suffering from this complaint. No one who heard Valéry describe the look of the doomed man listening to his symptoms being pointed out to the public, and the callousness of the professor, could ever accuse him of being inhuman.

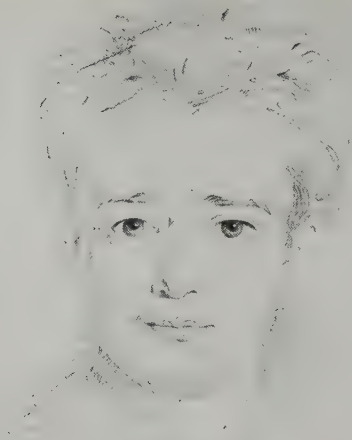
It happened that I was living at that time in the South of France, almost next door to one of those immortal forty who knew very little about this particular candidate when he came to pay him his first regulation Academic visit. The visit, however, was often repeated; Valéry stayed many times in the villa across the way and very often escaped from his more important hosts to spend a less official afternoon or evening with us. Once, indeed, it was with us he stayed a whole week rather than across the way, but the time when we most enjoyed his conversation was during the four or five days that he sat to my husband for his portrait. It was this that gave me the idea and the opportunity of taking a few notes of his talk. I set them down here just as I noted them at the time, disjointed and incomplete as they are.

★            ★            ★

Valéry sits in an armchair facing the painter, beside whom I am placed so that the sitter may be kept animated by having someone to talk to. My task is not difficult. The slightest interjection—a simple show of interest which, indeed, isn't show, sets him going. He doesn't attempt to *pose*. Simon is doing him '*au vol*'. He rolls and smokes endless cigarettes. He doesn't exactly fidget, isn't exactly restless, but mobile, '*d'une extrême mobilité*', says Simon. His face is almost liquid, the expressions flow over it so quickly and smoothly. He rambles on in a kind of disconnected monologue; laughs low; blinks; suddenly opens his eyes very wide and *drinks* the light; shuts them both; shuts only one. His great, dark blue eyes are not piercing (like Gide's) but absorbing. They rarely see outside objects, unless he deliberately looks at them; it is his own thought he is gazing at. He



PAUL VALÉRY. By Simon Bussy



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very often makes a contemptuous 'pooh' with his mouth. Et puis je m'en f—s!' is his favourite interjection.

Janie sits on the table just behind him. I have begged her to take notes as he talks, but she is afraid of being caught. Every now and then he quotes a few lines of poetry and sometimes turns round and appeals to her to supply a word or a line, which she very often can. 'C'est épatant d'avoir son livre comme cela derrière soi!' Sometimes he tries to catch her out.

'Le sujet de la *Jeune Parque*?' he said one day. 'C'est la physiologie et la psychologie d'une jeune fille—comme Janie, par exemple.'

Today, à-propos of I don't know what, it was of Victor Hugo he talked. 'Victor Hugo, c'est l'homme qui a fait les plus beaux vers. Rien n'est plus beau, rien n'est plus fort que lui par moments. Il a une virtuosité incomparable.' He then recited the last lines of the great poem on Théophile Gautier's death in *Toute la Lyre*.

His articulation which, as a rule, is so bad (he talks as if his mouth were full of potatoes) that one has the greatest difficulty in following him, becomes perfectly clear when he reads or recites. His voice is deep, sonorous, rolling, but he speaks low, uses very little emphasis, doesn't like readers 'qui cherchent l'effet'.

When he had finished the passage he commented on it and pointed out a few special lines:

... et ce grand siècle avec tous ses rayons,  
Entre en cette ombre immense où, pâles, nous fuyons.

This line, he said, produces its effect of shade and terror, not so much by the meaning of the words themselves, as by the audacious use of its alliterative vowels, stretching out to an interminable length and the strange huddle of the final hemistich. And in the next two lines with their abrupt and almost cacophonous consonants:

Oh! quel farouche bruit font dans le crépuscule  
Les chênes qu'on abat pour le bûcher d'Hercule! . . .

He made us hear the rhythmic strokes of a ferocious axe. And then he went on:

Le dur faucheur avec sa large lame avance  
Pensif et pas à pas vers le reste du blé . . .

With barely an epithet, by sheer force of sound and rhythm, the slow, heavy, inexorable tread of the reaper advances towards us. Valéry's reading was an incomparable lesson in elocution and the inexhaustible capabilities of the French alexandrine.

'Ah! C'est beau cela! C'est absurde de dire le contraire; c'est un très grand bonhomme. Mais l'époque l'a gâté. S'il était venu 40 ans plus tard—1860 mettons—il aurait été bien meilleur; il aurait évité ce romantisme, cette rhétorique; il aurait donné plus à la musique et moins à l'expression oratoire. C'est amusant le mot de Cocteau: "Victor Hugo est un fou qui s'est cru Victor Hugo", mais Victor Hugo n'était pas bête comme le disent les imbéciles. Il a quelquefois *fait* la bête mais il ne l'était pas.' He gave a sketch of the subject of *Le Mot* and said: 'Ce n'est pas de la poésie évidemment mais c'est d'une virtuosité prodigieuse, fabuleuse. Ah! Quelle force dans le métier!' He quoted another line of Hugo's (I can't remember it) and pointed out the accumulation of *a's*. And then he quoted two lines from Mallarmé's *Les Fenêtres*:

*Ivre, il vit, oubliant l'horreur des saintes huiles,  
Les tisanes, l'horloge et le lit infligé . . .*

'Que d'i's!' he exclaimed, 'Ah! il y a longtemps que je n'ai tant dit de poésie. Je n'y pense jamais à la poésie—jamais.'

I asked him, I don't know why, whether he had ever read *Paradise Lost*. 'Non. C'est très difficile, n'est-ce pas? Je suis très paresseux. Et puis j'ai très peu lu. Je n'oserais jamais avouer les livres que je n'ai pas lus.' Then, laughing heartily, 'En général je ne lis que les livres dont je fais les préfaces! Figurez-vous que je n'ai découvert Racine qu'en 1910. Je dois dire que j'ai trouvé ça *assez fort*. Sans images! Faire de l'effet sans effet, c'est ce qu'il y a de plus difficile. Mais Corneille! Voilà un écrivain magnifique! Et Bossuet! p—p—p! C'est le plus grand écrivain français, sans aucun doute, le plus grand.' He repeated this constantly and with great fervour. 'D'autre part, j'ai lu des livres que personne n'a lus. Des livres de technologie. C'est ça qui m'intéresse. Je ne lis pas pour apprendre les sentiments du monsieur qui écrit les livres. Je me fiche des sentiments du voisin. J'ai les miens! Ce que je lui demande ce sont des *moyens*.'

'La richesse c'est la possibilité. Un homme riche dit: "Si je

eux faire cela, je le *peux*!" Il n'y a que cela qui soit intéressant—on pas de *faire* les choses mais de *pouvoir* les faire. Le *pouvoir*!"

'La théorie de l'art—il n'y a que cela qui m'intéresse. Quant aux œuvres—je m'en fous!'

He talked much during one of his visits of a subject which he discusses lengthily in some of his writings—the difference between music and poetry, between the poet and the musician:

'La musique est faite tandis que la poésie n'existe pas. Le musicien a ses notes, ses timbres etc. Il n'a plus qu'à s'occuper de la partie supérieure de son art—la combinaison. Le poète n'a que le langage, les mots. Mais le langage est une chose qui sert, qui est pratique, donc anti-poétique. Le musicien est soutenu par son art; le poète doit lutter tout le temps contre son instrument.

'Je voulais autrefois faire un ouvrage sur le langage, mais c'est terriblement difficile et j'ai échoué. Je ne sais pas qui pourrait faire cela. Il faudrait peut-être un mathématicien, mais d'habitude les mathématiciens n'ont pas le sens du langage. C'est un cerveau comme Laplace qu'il faudrait. Moi, j'ai essayé, mais je ne suis pas assez fort. Je me suis dit, "Ceci, n'est pas pour toi".

'Il y a beaucoup de livres sur le langage et il y en a d'excellents, mais il y a un tas de choses dont ils ne traitent pas. Les Grecs avaient très bien divisé le langage en deux parties—la logique formelle—ils n'en connaissaient pas d'autre—et la rhétorique (le mot est impropre), c'est-à-dire ce qui est figures, métaphores, la partie pour le tout, etc.; mais tout cela est bien insuffisant. Ils ont indiqué le chemin pourtant.

'Oui, c'est par rapport au cerveau que cela m'intéresse. Tout cela est intimement lié aux fonctions du cerveau. Mais il fallait commencer par inventer un langage—des symboles pour ainsi dire, mathématiques. J'y ai travaillé longtemps; j'ai des tas et des tas de notes à ce sujet.

'Mais il y a une partie de la littérature dont on ne s'est presque pas occupé et qui certainement pourrait donner quelque chose si l'on avait la force de s'y mettre—c'est la composition. On n'a jamais fait une pièce *composée*—un peu longue évidemment—oh, une centaine de vers. Je ne parle pas des crescendos, des montées, des descentes etc.—tout cela est élémentaire . . .'

'Comme une fugue, par exemple?'

'Oui, justement. La composition des parties. Personne ne fait

cela. Ni pour la prose du reste. Il faudrait y réfléchir, l'étudier énormément, pendant longtemps. Mais toujours dans toute chose la préparation devrait être très longue et l'exécution très rapide.'

One day he pulled out the support of the desk of my bureau—a thin, narrow, straight piece of wood. 'Ha! Ha!' he laughed, 'cela, c'est très voluptueux.' Then, with great care, he balanced a china cup on it, which he had been using as an ash-tray (une 'cinéraire amphore', he said, and quoted almost the whole of Mallarmé's sonnet).

'Oh!' he said, 'n'ayez pas peur, je ne la casserai pas. Mais je peux vous dire que ma spécialité c'est de racommoder les choses qui sont cassées. Je suis très fort pour cela. C'est un travail très amusant et très philosophique. C'est la transmutation de ce que nous avons cassé en ce que nous aimerions que nous n'eussions pas cassé.'

He never missed an opportunity of a dig at philosophy, psychology, etc. Talking about his volume of essays *Variété*, which had recently come out, he said that he would probably bring out several more volumes of *Variété* with slightly different trends. For instance, the next *Variété* would be 'plus ou moins philosophique—si l'on peut employer ce mot *obsène*'.

He described the poet Emmanuel Signoret, who, towards the end of his career used to become extremely muddled (he drank himself to death—unfortunately, for he had unquestionable gifts). One day someone mentioned psychology in front of Signoret who, being half-seas over, had not quite grasped what had been said: 'Oh, tout ça, tout ça, vous savez—la psychologie, la photographie, la théologie—', he had exclaimed angrily. This, said Valéry, was the correct attitude towards these subjects.

'Est-que le livre de Thibaudet sur Mallarmé est bien?' we asked him. 'Bien et mal,' he answered. 'Il y mêle un tas de choses. Bergson, etc.' Then, chuckling a good deal, 'Thibaudet, c'est le Professeur Ivre—ivre de livres. C'est comme le *Bateau Ivre*:

*Comme je descendais des livres impassibles  
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les bouquins.*

Son livre sur moi? C'est effrayant. Il veut à tout prix faire de moi une espèce de second Bergson. J'estime beaucoup Bergson. Je m'entends très bien avec lui, nous avons beaucoup de points de contact, mais ma pensée est tout-à-fait différente de la sienne.



ne donne pas du tout à l'instinct l'importance qu'il lui donne. "élan vital etc. c'est un mot, ça ne veut rien dire. Et Thibaudet fait ce livre sur moi à cause d'un mot dans la *Jeune Parque*." He then quoted a line of the passage which describes the act of going to sleep:

. . . la devineresse  
Intérieure s'use et se désintéresse.

"Il dit que j'ai employé le mot "se désintéresse" dans un sens bergsonien, tandis que c'est un mot extrêmement simple que j'ai employé dans le sens ordinaire."

He spoke of the importance his imaginary reader has for the writer. "Il est évident que l'on écrit pour que quelqu'un vous lise. Le public? Oui. Mais quel public? Un public de choix. En y réfléchissant, ce public se réduit de plus en plus jusqu'à ce qu'il vous semble qu'il ne reste plus qu'une seule personne qui puisse vous comprendre. Alors c'est une lettre qu'on écrit. C'est pour cela que les lettres sont souvent d'une importance capitale dans l'œuvre d'un auteur. Et puis il vous arrive de croire qu'il n'y a que vous-même qui puissiez comprendre votre pensée. Alors à quoi bon l'écrire?"

"Il y a deux espèces de lecteurs—le lecteur passif et le lecteur actif. Le lecteur passif subit. Le lecteur actif s'arrête à chaque phrase et fait des objections. Il cherche à se rendre compte comment l'auteur a été amené à mettre *telle* chose dans son livre. L'auteur doit prévenir toutes les objections qu'on peut faire. Et puis dans un livre vous n'agissez plus. C'est un duel dont vous êtes absent."

"J'étais un très mauvais élève—oui, à Montpellier. Je n'ai jamais pu apprendre le grec. C'était un camarade qui me faisait toujours mes versions grecques. J'étais toujours en punition. Le professeur de rhétorique était un imbécile. Un professeur du lycée m'a écrit dernièrement pour me dire qu'il avait mis ma photographie dans l'étude. "Mais monsieur," lui ai-je écrit en réponse, "qu'est-ce qui vous prend? Vous êtes fou. J'étais un très mauvais élève et je m'en flatte."

It was in the spring of 1925 that he said to me, 'Je suis un éternel fatigué. Mon hiver a été affreux. J'ai eu tous les embêtements possibles et de tous les genres. Ah! que je suis mal fichu—au moral et au physique!

'Je n'ai eu le temps de rien faire. Tout mon temps est pris par des imbécilités—faire partie de Comités qui décernent des Prix Littéraires! C'est idiot! Du reste je juge très mal la littérature. Comment pourrais-je en juger? *Je n'y crois pas*. Quand on lit des romans, on se dit à chaque phrase, "Cela pourrait être autrement. Il n'y a pas de raison pour que cela ne soit pas autrement." Alors comment voulez-vous qu'on s'y intéresse?'

'But', I interposed, thinking of *Werther*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and so many 'epoch-making' works, 'les romans agissent, il faut y croire.' Valéry's thought, however, was fixed on the credibility of the work itself. 'Il faut y croire!' he laughed, 'p—p—c'est comme ça qu'on justifie toutes les religions!'

'Barrès? Non, je n'aime pas beaucoup cela' (and one felt that this was an understatement, pushed to an extreme for the sake of politeness). 'Il appartient à la race des grands charlatans. Lui, Madame de Noailles, Rostand, d'Annunzio—il y en a eu quatre ou cinq comme cela de nos temps. Cela joue avec des choses comme la mort, la volupté, Jeanne d'Arc, Jésus Christ, p—, p—, p—. Ça n'est pas très décent.'

'C Claudel? Oui, c'est un grand poète—un grand poète . . . Mais il n'a ni élégance ni économie—Il se sert d'une grue pour soulever une cigarette.' He said this as he was rolling his cigarette with a single elegant gesture.

Shortly before one of his visits, I had been discussing with an English poet *Le Cimetière Marin* and I told Valéry that B. T. had particularly objected to three lines in it:

*Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance,  
Comme en délice il change son absence  
Dans une bouche où sa forme se meurt . . . !*

'Ah! Ce sont les seuls bons vers du *Cimetière Marin*. Oui, vraiment ils ne sont pas trop mauvais ceux-là. Ah! si j'avais toujours écrit comme cela, j'aurais fait quelque chose de pas trop mal. Tout le reste de mon œuvre, je m'en fous, mais ces trois vers, j'en suis assez content. Alors, s'il n'a pas aimé ces vers, il n'a pas dû aimer non plus,

*Le changement des rives en rumeur.'*

'Justement, il m'a fait une scène à propos de ces vers.'

‘Oui, c’est assez difficile. C’est très elliptique. Ça veut dire tout simplement que les vagues font du bruit dans l’air. J’ai écrit le *Cimetière Marin* parce que je voulais faire des vers de dix syllabes. C’est une forme qu’on a très peu employée en français. Ça devient vite vulgaire, surtout quand le vers est divisé en 5—5. Les vers du *Cimetière* sont de 6—4 ou de 4—6. Il y en a un de 5—5. La Fontaine en a fait de très mauvais en 5—5. Victor Hugo en a très peu fait. Baudelaire en a fait. *La Mort des Amants*, par exemple:

*Nous aurons des lits pleins d’odeurs légères . . .*

Ça ne donne pas de très bons résultats. Au fond le *Cimetière Marin* c’est le vers du Dante:

*Per me si va nella città dolente . . .*

*Ce toit tranquille où marchent des colombes . . .*

‘Je me suis amusé à mettre le *Cimetière Marin* en alexandrins, en ajoutant deux syllabes à chaque vers:

*Ce toit tranquille et pur où marchent des colombes . . .*

Puis je lui ai coupé les cheveux.’

‘But, at any rate,’ he said, ‘je peux me flatter d’avoir donné le coup de grâce au vers libre.’

He once complained that it was said of him that he spent too much time at tea-parties and with society ladies. He declared that he certainly preferred the company of a pleasant woman of the world to that of a third-rate intellectual.

There had recently been a controversy between Gide and certain Roman Catholics on religious matters. The thing was a misunderstanding, said Valéry. ‘Pour Gide, le royaume des cieux est en nous,’ whereas for the Catholics, ‘it’s somewhere over there’, pointing with his stick to the sky. ‘On s’est trompé de royaume!’ he said with huge chucklings.

Was the story he told us about a visit he once paid to London an imaginary fable? Was it a mere illustration of an attack of ennui? It seems impossible to believe it literally. He was staying in a London boarding house, he said. It was Sunday and there was a fog. He decided to commit suicide, and chose hanging as

his method. But a cord must be found. He set about looking for one, but in the course of his search, he came upon a book, which of course he opened. It was a collection of funny stories by Alphonse Allais (how did it get there, one wonders?); they amused him so much that he went on reading and by the time he got to the end, his desire to find a cord had left him.

In the evenings, as we were sitting over the fire, he used often to read aloud poetry to us and talk about what he read. One evening it was Villon's *Prayer to the Virgin* that he read, beginning

*Dame des cieux, régente terrienne . . .*

He said that Villon was one of the greatest of French poets, and that much as he admired Ronsard and the Pléiade, it was perhaps a pity that they had inclined the course of French poetry so definitely towards the ornate, decorative, Italian style and away from the more specifically French manner of Villon. Not till Verlaine had that note been struck again.

We asked him to read us something out of *Charmes*. He chose *La Pythie*. In some book, discussing, I think, inspiration, in which he didn't believe, he dwells on what he told us briefly that evening. 'God sometimes gives a poet a single line—he must find the others himself. I wrote *La Pythie* round a single line which God gave me:

. . . *Pâle, profondément mordue . . .*

One evening he talked of the great difficulty of introducing a *period* into a poem—a passage, that is, of some ten or twelve lines without a break.

'How rare it is to find such a passage! What skill, what power is needed for such an achievement!' Then he pulled down from the little book-case over the mantelpiece, a volume of Racine. 'But here is one!' he said. 'A superb accomplishment!' He opened the book at the scene where Esther, having dismissed her chorus of young girls, kneels down alone on the stage and sends up the prayer to God which begins:

. . . *O mon souverain Roi,  
Me voici donc tremblante et seule devant toi,*



and contains the great period of ten lines which he read loud to us:

*Pour moi que tu retiens parmi ces infidèles,  
Tu sais combien je hais leurs fêtes criminelles,  
Et que je mets au rang des profanations  
Leur table, leur festins et leurs libations;  
Que même cette pompe où je suis condamnée,  
Ce bandeau dont il faut que je paraisse ornée  
Dans ces jours solennels à l'orgueil dédiés,  
Seule et dans le secret je le foule à mes pieds,  
Qu'à ces vains ornements je préfère la cendre,  
Et n'ai de goût qu'aux pleurs que tu me vois répandre.*

It is impossible not to hear an echo of this passage in *la Jeune Parque's* invocation to the stars, in which Valéry himself has attempted and perhaps succeeded in accomplishing what he considered a rare and consummate achievement—a period in verse:

*Tout-puissants étrangers, inévitables astres,  
Qui daignez faire luire au lointain temporel,  
Je ne sais quoi de pur et de surnaturel,  
Vous qui dans les mortels plongez jusques aux larmes  
Ces souverains éclats, ces invincibles armes  
Et les élancements de votre éternité,  
Je suis seule avec vous, tremblante, ayant quitté  
Ma couche; et sur l'écueil mordu par la merveille,  
J'interroge mon cœur quelle douleur l'éveille,  
Quel crime par moi-même ou sur moi consommé? . . .  
. . . Ou si le mal me suit d'un songe refermé  
Quand (au velours du souffle envolé l'or des lampes)  
J'ai de mes bras épais environné mes tempes,  
Et longtemps de mon âme attendu les éclairs?*

Once, when I was welcoming him to our house after a long time had gone by without our seeing him, he took both my hands and kissed them one after the other with a gesture of charming courtesy. 'Alors, vous n'avez pas trop peur du monstre?' he said.

A monster? Yes. But was there ever one so strangely human?

E. MAXWELL FRY

A LETTER ABOUT  
ARCHITECTURE

*At sea, January 1946.*

MY DEAR J.,

I have not the temerity to address readers whom I cannot imagine on a subject in which I feel insecure, but you and I having so often talked of architecture sitting on our verandah at Accra I can continue in the same vein to you without feeling myself launched upon perilous seas, and there may be value in writing now as I approach England than later from the midst of it.

I remember how one evening as we discussed our attitude to the mechanistic side of modern life you read with glowing emphasis D. H. Lawrence's poem that starts with the line

There is no point in work unless it absorbs you . . .  
and ends abruptly with

we will cancel the machines we have got  
and how our affection for what is innocent and unconscious in the African way of life was stirred by the lines

. . . so with houses, ships, shoes, wagons or cups or loaves  
Men might put them forth as a snail its shell, as a bird that leans  
its breast against its nest, to make it round.

And remembering this I add to it the sense of an argument that took place in Boston in which we qualified our welcome of science and industrialism by saying that we accepted them as a fate but took leave to look every new gift horse in the mouth, hoping to know the difference between teeth and fangs.

Events justify our lack of faith, but they do not, I think, turn us from an attitude toward architecture that accepts the material offered by the life we live but sets greater store on the spirit that transforms it. Even so this material itself is to be examined closely for its value as an agent of living. Our age, I am sure, overvalues it. Our high priests are scientists and they would have us wonder at and bow down to each new discovery, whether it

...e a new drug or a new machine, press echoing press in immaculate black and white print issuing endlessly, and suave, false oracular speech broadcasting it limitlessly; read and heard by millions everywhere, who, nevertheless, having read or having heard, must bend their backs once more to toil upon an earth to which science can bring no more of essential moisture to its barrenness than will make up for what it has lost to it elsewhere.

We see in Africa how the forests are being cut down and how erosion spreads its crackled dry fingers into the green land, and while we hear the pundits lecturing the poor native cultivators—the pundits from their cooled offices to the natives in the bush—we know and the pundits know, that we have wrecked a communal life with our cash economy and destroyed a unity with our division of labour, and when we are humble and meek we acknowledge how difficult it is to recreate a unity in what we profess to be a better and a more advanced way of living.

There are those who hold no place for architecture in a recovering Europe, or no more of it than can, for instance, be compressed into a minimum home unit, the chief virtue of which, being mechanic, must be extended into further patterns which to preserve this virtue must continue mechanic. Those of us who sought to enrich the content of an evolving art by personal exploration were told to rejoin the proletarian ranks and cut no more capers on parade since it had been determined that mass destruction could only be met by mass construction, mass calling unto mass in codified elaborations of the deadeningly obvious.

This way lies death. For five years or more you and I have had to allow ourselves to be carried along by this fantastic war machine with its cumbersome, obvious and shameful expedients culminating in the atom bomb and the destruction of half the fixed assets in Europe. And are we to agree to such abnegation for ever? To go riding blindly in a procession of mechanical tanks to a last and final doom? Is there to be no more time for any play whatsoever? No hope of it even?

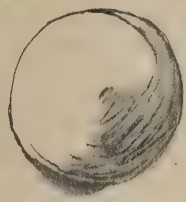
I prefer your proposition; to think of a life that would be worth living within the general compass of our fate and to see then to what extent material can enrich spirit, that being perhaps the essence of the contribution we make as architects towards the life we live as members of the community. Agree that the means of production bend us towards unvarying reproduction of parts,

which is the opposite to the infinitely variable idea of life, then architecture has the responsibility of creating community living-places in which these unvarying modules are submerged in a variety of larger forms that give out a strong human rhythm and set a boundary to the scientific pursuit of its own death-moving efficiency, asserting the dignity of the individual through the apparently inconsequential joy of the artist.

I believe you are right to say that modern architecture has even so taken too material and too mechanical a view of its powers of expression. It was its peculiar morality to set store upon its functional integrity and to claim a unique capacity for fulfilling the demands of society with accuracy, neatness, dispatch and economy. That was understandable, even unavoidable, and it bore the merit of concentrating attention upon a set of proportions of mathematical purity, cleansed of every historical association. I was educated to a love of late Georgian architecture which I refined upon by study, but it failed to build a railway station for me, and when I first saw photographs of Mies' van der Rohe's Tugendhat house I realized with a relief that was like an opening into a new heaven that it was unnecessary that I should, here being a set of proportions circumscribing the order of space necessary to my own age with a breadth and an immaculateness the match of anything that had gone before.

Le Corbusier did the same for me in his houses at Garches and Poissy, but his restless fancy tinkered too much with the idea of interpreting the machine until his cities of steel and glass and concrete became the images of a machine state, as one may clearly see in the Brazilian developments of his ideas. Not that he stopped there. His own buildings, on the domestic level, were exploring all sorts of richnesses not mechanic, he being the Picasso of architecture and by no means content with the range of materials thrown up by industry. His reintroduction of stone as an element of building was a poet's necessity rather than a builder's, but it corrected the course of architecture at the right moment and is a partial answer to your criticism that modern architecture has too restricted an emotional range: it was widening, if not exactly in the direction you meant.

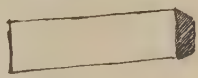
Amid our long conversations you returned one evening, I remember, to the fascinating connection between music and architecture and halted our walk suddenly to give me a moving



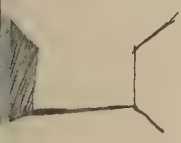
sphere much  
more lively  
than the  
dead  
faceless  
cube



but the  
rectangular  
block is on  
the move already →



Piazza, Venice  
visually evocative -  
a most subtle  
measurement of space



ANGER!  
the stop!



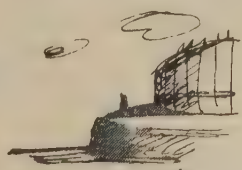
caution!  
the sinister emphasis



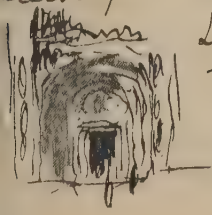
GO!  
Invitation - &  
reversal.



receiving



and rejecting.



Lucevis question  
- the cavern  
entrance





exposition of the qualities of the scale of notation upon which our western music is built, how one note is dominant, another repressive, how the leading note calls for a closure and so on. 'And is there not', you said, 'a notation for architecture? Are there not forms and spaces, and combinations of them which produce like effects? What does the dome signify? What comparative qualities has the sphere and the cube? When you design a building or a group of buildings are you aware of the effect they create? Do you consciously arrange your material or have you, to a greater extent than you have been aware of, been guided by the mere cerebral intoxication of a new set of lines and spaces which you have not yet learned properly to manipulate?'

I bethought me then of far other emotions that it might indeed evoke, finding my examples in great variety, as for instance in the view along the Piazzetta towards the lagoon, buildings closing in on each side to open with a sense of infinite release towards the pearly scape of moving water, the twin columns marking the take-off into space, and S. Maria Maggiore defining the distance. There can be feelings of compression and relief, Geoffrey Scott's 'empathy' to the *nth*;—and danger. Is not the sinister danger of a Chirico painting an architectural quality that I have felt; where? I have felt it as I approached the Duke of York's steps from above. It is the danger of a precipice, the steps hidden from view. There is an end of the pavement, only the great black column standing there with nothing beyond; instinctively danger. And to find the steps, which every time I have to tell myself are there, is an anti-climax, just because ascending them, and finding myself on the level of a new world in Waterloo Place, is so satisfactory a climax, marked and dignified by the same column for which I have therefore two separate sets of feelings, one coming and one going.

And there is another and a delicious emotion of danger which I get when I walk along an unguarded quayside, a drop into the sea on one side but on the other the protective crooked arm of the quayside buildings; and it is necessary that the curve of the quay should be concave or it would tend to throw me into the sea, in which case I should prefer railings to lean on and would enjoy still another and quite different emotion.

Then I recalled the dark recessed porch entrances of St. Marco giving into the dark womblike interior beyond, and was led

from this to remember many another such cavernous ingoing withing upon ring of articulated stratification breaking up light, diversifying shadow towards the dark mystery of the threshold, the dramatic moment of entering in. And would the effect be the greater if this cavern entrance were carved into the lower courses of some great resistant drum, a mass of stone? or must the preparation be extended in concavity, the cavern at the valley head, as it were? and I saw fresh modifications at every turn.

Faltering in my course I returned to consider the perfection of the sphere, the dead static mass of the cube, and the first suggestion of motion in the rectangular cube, and recognized at once the power of apparent motion over the emotion of the beholder, tracing it from a state of inaction in these elementary forms to its most turbulent manifestation in Baroque architecture, and wondering where and for what ends its rhythm proved most moving, in which process I found some explanation for our disappointment in New York by seeing it as an unqualified assortment of poorly articulated cubic shapes, barely beginning to be architecture, an unconscious as opposed to a meditated response to financial pressure. I found an exactly similar phenomenon at Johannesburg, which is interesting.

I could go on to compare the dim beckoning mystery of the Gothic nave with the expanding grandeur of St. Paul's, but it is enough to have elaborated your suggestions that the vocabulary of modern architecture is capable of enrichment though it lacks the service of an organized and deeply felt religion.

Obvious as some of my examples appear to me as I write them, I think they have been but little regarded by modern architects who have in years now to come to consider the modelling of large masses of buildings, not town planning on paper, but the designing of such towns as will arouse and satisfy emotions to the limits proper to architecture.

Which brings me back to the subject of this letter, the future of architecture. I wonder if you feel as uncertain about the general future as I do. Being away from England for so long, I have had to rely even more than you upon newspapers and occasional broadcasts, and the impression I have is of a Europe so badly wounded that even without the threat of atomic energy the hope of recovery hangs in the balance, the patient lacking vitality, the doctor faith. Is there anything in the world

of art or science that can mend a broken heart? Where in this Europe are the young men and women to set about it? and who is there to walk beside them?

On my way through Uganda I met Ernst May, whose housing in Frankfort once fired us with the certainty that a contemporary architecture, even where it was confined to the narrowly variable units of the municipal flat, could achieve nobility and grace. We sat talking of his hopes of working in Europe again—he is doing a plan for Kampala, the commercial capital of Uganda at the moment, and making a lovely thing of it—and I wondered then what chance there might be of re-connecting Germany and with it Europe, with the spirit of that Weimar period and with at least some of its dispersed talent, because it will be useless to attempt to make good the material damage of war without restoring the spirit; and as we set down the mighty from their seats so we should exalt the humble and meek, the men of faith and truth.

We are better off in England, our war losses not numbering the better part of a generation as in the last war, nor subduing the faith in our star that indeed burned lower in 1938 than at any time since. I do not think it is the material aspect of reconstruction we have to measure in estimating the future of our architecture, but the extent of belief in ourselves and our capacity to live courageously and well in the circumstances allotted to us. If this is granted we may go on to inquire into the degree of acceptance of an architecture that has broken with the so-called traditions of the past and that calls for either an appreciation of abstract form or a measure of welcome for what can now only in cynicism be called 'the brave new world'. I am trying to measure the extent of taste in the community and to do so I must cast about for signs of liveliness in the appreciation of music, sculpture, painting, poetry, architecture and town planning. And what do you think of the situation? Alive or dead? It is very important because without it little is possible, and with it everything.

Technically, we can do what we can do. The problem of prefabrication, for instance, has been solved technically long ago. Our troubles in the world today arise from a lack of understanding of the art of doing things, not the technique: of the art of governing ourselves without depressing the individual, of the art of amusing ourselves, the art of living. And the art of architecture



DUBLIN AIRPORT, 1938. Desmond Fitzgerald, Architect



TUGENDHAT HAUS, BRUNN. Mies van der Rohe, Architect



to flourish in our midst and be as a sign to Europe that the life of the spirit has not been utterly destroyed requires first an atmosphere of freedom in which the individual may range at will, an understanding of the idea of government such as swung the Labour Party into power in the moment of victory, that is, a deep and widely held feeling for justice, and years of steady material rehabilitation undisturbed by large-scale novelties taxing the common capacity of assimilation. Again I say, what do you think of the situation? How is freedom with us? and justice? and are we in good heart?

As to the form architecture is likely to take, what can one say? It will work out as it will. There is no doubt that we will continue to use the materials and evolve the structures that have produced the set of proportions that causes it to be in the proper sense of the word original, or to some tastes puritan. You say it is apt to be thin and theoretic and I agree with you. It has not, as it were, much story yet. It is unreminiscent, has no old clothes, and the clouds of glory it may trail are light and vaporous.

But it must follow its star in faith and these things will be added to it. That it has no ornament, no enrichment, worries me not at all. The egg and dart, the chevron and billet were a long time a-coming even with stone to carve and time in which to carve it. The necessity for ornament will arrive when architects are given tasks for the fulfilment of which ornament is as necessary as were the coloured glass story-telling windows of medieval church building or the shock-tactic sculpture of Jesuit west ends. What we want are jobs to do in which painters and sculptors are necessary to the carrying out of the intentions of our clients, the State, the city, the company, the individual, the church or the school; that there should be a preponderance of those for whom a lively architecture has become a necessity, who see beyond the practical task of physical restoration—(how narrowly avoided repeating rehabilitation!)—the opportunities for the creation of living conditions which the machine makes possible but the imagination makes beautiful.

If you were to ask me what indications there are of such an awakening I should point to the interest in architecture and town planning among the general public; the generous and imaginative interpretation of school building programmes by educational authorities; the growth of the National Trust not entirely because

of taxation; the popularity of Puffin and King Penguin books; the rapid absorption of an expensive monograph on a living English sculptor, Henry Moore; the well-filled concert halls; British Arts Council; the current brand of humour to be found in, say, *Lilliput* or *Punch* even; the kind of conversations I have had with my R.E. sergeants—you can add to the list from your own experiences travelling about England in wartime.

Only the mass of what is to be done and the pressure of time can defeat us. I marvel at the patience with which the nation bears its present situation and it gives me hope that it may not rush the position before enough men and women are returned to make rapid but orderly progress possible. We know how true this is of architectural education with six years to make up and everything to do. But what of the Continent? I wonder whether it would be possible to work out a system whereby British Architectural students should be taught a European language and sent, as Liverpool School students used to be sent, to American architects' offices, to Continental architects' offices to help them in their gargantuan task, acquire experience, and extend exactly the type of practical sympathy that should come from us. I am frankly scared of losing our grip upon European civilization, and I hold that it is so valuable to the world that we should take the most active steps to restore not only its physical but its more important spiritual manifestations.

There. We shall see.

As each day passes in indolent monotony the sun that cooked us for so many months together grows weaker, the sea greys over, and cold winds bring on the long Atlantic swell. Your Shakespeare got left out of the main packing and each day I have read a play, starting quite properly at the beginning with every intention of reaching as far as the days will take me. I can recommend this wholesale way of reading Shakespeare and I recommend Shakespeare as a cure for sick hearts, there being so much of him about in even so small a company as this ship carries that one must believe in us, and with us, our architecture.

Your,

M.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON  
SAMUEL PALMER'S  
FRIENDS<sup>1</sup>

I

It was natural that the group of artists which Samuel Palmer's personality, by its force and glow, gathered around itself, should also share much of his own religious enthusiasm. The Palmer circle consisted of six artists, Henry Walter, F. O. Finch, George Richmond, Edward Calvert, Frederick Tatham, and Welby Sherman; and of two, who were deeply concerned with art, though not artists themselves. These were Tatham's brother Arthur, an undergraduate, and Palmer's Baptist first cousin—John Giles.

Like Palmer, Giles developed leanings towards the Oxford Movement; he went still further, and leant towards Rome—so much so that he was hurried off by his friends to be baptized into the Church of England by Manning, in Cardinal Manning's re-Roman days. He was a stockbroker, who looked after Palmer's money affairs, a devoted medievalist, with a love of late-seventeenth-century Catholic books of devotion, and a habit of pronouncing the -ed at the end of words, as in 'mincèd pies'. He, too, was bound by personal veneration for Blake.

Welby Sherman made the least mark of the circle. He was younger than the rest, had little talent as an artist, and wished to become an engraver. He has left an inept drawing or two, an engraving, and a few engravings after Calvert and Palmer. The circle tried hard to launch him, he was patronized—or at least tried out for a little—by the celebrated Dr. Monro in Monro's old age; he was with Palmer at the very close of his Shoreham stay. But his beginnings and his end are mysterious. He appears to have become the black sheep of the pasture, going off to France eventually with money belonging either to Richmond or Henry Walter. Henry Walter was more considerable; he was older than Palmer, a hard-working professional artist

<sup>1</sup> This is part of a book on the early life of Samuel Palmer to be published later in the year by Messrs. Routledge.

of mediocre skill, who painted animals and did animal plates for Ackermann drawing-books. I have seen many of his pictures, but none with any scrap of the inward vision of his friends. His work suggests only an easy straightforwardness in religion. In spirit the Tathams, Finch, Calvert, and Richmond came much closer.

To begin with Finch. Palmer called him 'my earliest friend'. As an artist—and his water-colours are still in and out of the sale-rooms—his ideal was not strengthened enough by observation. He was three years older than Palmer, and painted in a careful idiom derived from Claude, or the less intense kind of Turner, via John Varley. Now and again I have seen an oil by Finch, or a solemn low-toned and less fanciful water-colour, which explains Palmer's respect for him. His letters and papers and poems are as commonplace and unimaginative as much of his painting (from which it is only an inch to Birket Foster). But, though in his output he was the least influenced by Blake (Walter excepted), he knew Blake before the others. Though their painting was so different, though (Walter excepted once more) he was the least excited, the calmest, and most balanced of the circle, yet, wrote Palmer, Finch of all of them 'was most inclined to believe in Blake's spiritual intercourse'. He came across a Swedenborg volume in the British Museum Library, and joined the Swedenborgians.

The Tathams were also religious, one orthodox, one unorthodox. Frederick revolted to a new religious eccentricity. Probably he deserves the strictures that have been passed on him for destroying Blake manuscripts, but if he did destroy them it was in obedience to his own beliefs as a member of the new Irvingite Church.

He drew and did sculpture with at any rate enough talent to earn Palmer's respect, but not enough to prevent himself being quickly discouraged. He was certainly as close to Blake as any of them, eventually looking after Blake's funeral, and taking care of his widow. In his short MS. life of Blake he says that Blake bequeathed him his unsold writings, paintings, and plates and that Blake had commended him to his wife, as he lay dying, as the manager of her affairs. I do not think myself that there is any reason to doubt Tatham's word, as several have done. Palmer, in his letters, years after—and Palmer's respect was always well founded and worth having—gives the impression that Tatham could have been nothing but an upright and good man, a grave,

haritable young man (who taught him that it was his duty to have a daily bath). Palmer went first of all to Shoreham in his company. To me it is inconceivable that he would not at once have broken with Tatham had there been any illegality about his control of Blake's property; inconceivable that Tatham was such a man, or that Tatham did anything for Mrs. Blake without the most decent and kindly intentions. And I fear that Palmer and Richmond (who never followed Blake into his deeper systematic ideas) would have agreed to the destruction of any Blake MSS. which seemed to them likely to harm his reputation.

At any rate, Tatham was another member of the circle with deep and an unusual religious fervour, possessed by Edward Irving, preaching, with fanatic eyes and long black hair to the shoulders, of the second coming of Christ. Irving's celebrity was at its height during the years in which the Palmer circle was formed and was most strong.

Arthur Tatham, his brother, was orthodox, but also felt his religion deep. 'I was with him', wrote Palmer, 'on the eve of his ordination, and remember his saying that it would probably cost him his life in testimony to the truth; so stormy were the prospects at that time' (just before the Reform Bill); but Arthur Tatham passed out of his life into the peaceful cure of the Cornish living of Boconnoc.

This leaves on the roll the two artists who, besides Palmer, were also men of distinction—Edward Calvert and George Richmond.<sup>1</sup>

## II

W. B. Yeats at one time had planned to write a book on Calvert, whom he called 'a fragmentary symbolist'. Such a symbolist 'evokes in his persons and his landscapes an infinite emotion, a perfected emotion, a part of the Divine Essence'; but 'he does not set his symbols in the great procession as Blake would have him, "in a certain order, suited to his imaginative energy"'. And Calvert did not equal Palmer in his power to invent and to sustain his vision. Blake and Palmer increased the youthful fire in him which caused his brief flare; and then he slowly frittered away his life with much less result, and more uncertainty of purpose. He was six years older than Palmer and had seen active

<sup>1</sup>John Linnell, an older man, was outside the group. Like Blake, he was one of its nurses and tutors.



service in the Navy before he came to London and met Palmer and Blake. He inherited a livelihood, and came of a family which seems to have had something to do with painting. His father is said to have patronized Girtin. After a childhood in the Fowey valley of Lostwithiel, and his naval service, he began to paint at Plymouth, mainly under A. B. Johns. Johns painted landscape in the haze of Ideal light. His oils of 'sentiment' were akin to Turner without fire, or J. B. Pyne; and he sent Calvert up to London with a letter of introduction to Fuseli. Palmer met him first at the Academy exhibition in 1826, looking like 'a prosperous, stalwart country gentleman', who was 'redolent of the sea, and in white trousers'. He had just settled, in May, in a small house in Brixton; and he had brought stocks up with him to sell through John Giles. At the Academy, the year before, he had exhibited a painting of nymphs, one of them, 'opening a way for herself through a nut-tree copse', which had brought Alfred Chalon to call upon him in admiration.

One can discover much of his early tastes. Leaving aside Blake for a moment, he loved Schiavone and Claude. With Linnell and Palmer and Wainwright, he admired Bonasone's broad engravings; and also (I should say) Aldegraver. 'Claude and Bonasone', he wrote in his old age; 'frequently present us with forms of childlike grace and innocence seated in recesses of woodland growth—the freshness of an early age—midst seeming pathways, threading the mysteries of retreat to seclusions of blessedness, that make one laugh outright from very joyfulness of soul'. Wordsworth's poetry, as a young man, 'he read aloud exquisitely'.

The effect on him of Blake's Virgil blocks anyone can trace in detail by comparing with them his own set of engravings. He worked on some of them under Blake's eye; and he also adopted in them figure groupings from the antique gems which Blake so much admired (the figure, for instance, in 'The Chamber Idyll'). But there was a serpent—or so it seemed to Palmer and Richmond, and Calvert's widowed mother down at Lostwithiel—twined round the tree of Calvert's paradise, a Greek serpent. Discreetly disguised, it is still visible in Richmond's reminiscences of him as a young man, for besides Wordsworth and Byron 'he was a very great lover of Plato, and admired W. Savage Landor very much. . . . Chapman's Homer and some of his hymns,

specially that to Pan, I have often heard him read.' He started off, in fact, with a vague aspiration towards Pan; then, in tune with Palmer and Blake, changed to a brief period of mystical Christianity, and finally backslid into a curious, developing and revitalizing paganism. Blake was not the only odd man in London, and to Richmond's phrase 'a very great lover of Plato' might be added, I think, that he was also a very great reader of Thomas Taylor the Platonist. But the story is apparent enough in the texts around the engravings, and in some sentences in letters from Palmer and from Calvert's mother.

'My poetic loves', Calvert wrote at some date or another to Richmond, 'have been associated more fondly, first and earliest, with Pan and the rustic deities—elemental natures'. His Academy picture, the 'Nymphs' of 1825, was no doubt the product of this early fondness. Then, as he settled in London, and came under the spell of Blake and Palmer, he was turned from the rustic deities. The earliest result of this that we know is the wood-engraving 'The Ploughman' or 'Christian Ploughing the Last Furrow of Life', completed and published in September 1827. The block was inscribed, 'Seen in the Kingdom of Heaven by vision through Jesus Christ our saviour'. But he was not completely converted. There was wavering between Christ and the elemental natures. In 1828, Calvert cut the wood-engraving now called, I believe incorrectly, 'The Baachante'. Palmer knew this figure with a lyre as 'The Prophet', and it is perhaps a somewhat androgynous Apollo, based on a common enough representation of Apollo in antique gems. In a letter of 24 June 1828, Palmer wrote to Richmond (and Richmond endorsed the letter 'Calvert's mysticism'): 'I dare say Mr. Calvert has got his print of the Prophet into a fine state by this time, and that his naughty disobedient heresies are falling away from about him like the scales of leprosy, & melting as the morning vapours melt from the sun'. Calvert's mother was also worried. In letters written before the end of 1828, she warned him: 'I certainly think that with your stimulated feelings you should compose yourself to less inquisitive study. It seems to me, whether on poetry, philosophy, or religion, all that you read tends to a dangerous disquiet.' And more tartly: 'You also ask "And is your heaven in futurity?" which question I can only answer by inquiring if your heaven is now in possession'.

Then, in September 1828 Palmer told Richmond: 'Mr. Calvert I found as I prognosticated in a former letter, risen from temptation, and finishing with surprising rapidity, the effect of prayer, a beautiful and luxuriant design of the cider pressing'. It was published on 10 October, inscribed, 'Edwd. Calvert inven. et sculp. by the Gift of God in Christ'. 'The Sheep of His Pasture' was probably done in 1828 as well. By 17 November he finished and published 'The Bride', inscribing it with a confession of his own return to God 'A stray lamb is led to Thy folds'. He seems to have stayed in the fold, engraving more variations on the theme of the Divine marriage, between the autumn of 1828 and the autumn of 1831. He inscribed one of these—'The Brook'—with the words 'The waters of this brook shall never fail to the married wife of the Lord God'. But he fell away once more, till Palmer, writing certainly of Calvert, tells Richmond: 'I cannot help daily anxiety for a dear friend of yours & mine who though the most amiable & conscientious of men—if he knew what was right & true—we have beheld now for years remaining in deliberate hostility to the gospel of Christ—do let us pray for him & at all seasonable opportunities not contend with, but "perswade" him, "knowing the terrors" as well as the unspeakable mercies of our Lord'. (Shoreham, 14 October 1834.) His wavering back to Pan may explain why, in their third states, he cut away the religious sentences from 'The Ploughman', 'The Cyder Feast', and 'The Brook'.

Plato and the Greeks were holding him, and he became the dreamer of pagan ideals chasing perfection and exploring harmonies in colour. He had enough money to preserve him in his dreams. His poetic loves began in the 'elemental natures', and 'thence'—to continue the quotation from his letter to Richmond—'thence upward through impulsive and Dionysiac energies. I have been busied with the beautiful Antique myths; ever in an upward course of purpose, and in vows to the Muses and Apollo.'

Probably both Calvert and Palmer read the writings and Platonic translations of Taylor, which were well known to John Linnell, and certainly to Blake; but Palmer went no further than a Christian neo-platonism: earthly objects to him were to be admired as hints of the perfections of Heaven. Earthly objects for Calvert were to be very much second to the divine ideas after which they were modelled.

'I have a fondness for the earth, and rather a Phrygian mood of regarding it', he wrote. 'I feel a yearning to see the glades and the nooks receding like vistas into the gardens of Heaven.' But as the earth dimmed for him, so his painting grew steadily more vapid. Palmer differs from Calvert and excels him because of his delight and absorption in natural objects as glorious images of a greater glory beyond Nature. And when Palmer as a man was enthusiastic, open, richly observant, positive, a curious compound of gravity and fun, Calvert was detached, aloof, and solemn. 'Short and squarely built,' said Richmond, 'with a forehead rather broad than high, with an expression rather contemplative than observant.' Palmer once teased his somewhat unreal heaviness by singing the British Grenadiers to him without stopping. And his writings have a heavy, rather pretentious touch.

Many people, artists and writers as well, had been infected by a similar taste and yearning. Coleridge had read Giordano Bruno (as well as Taylor) when he was himself 'intoxicated with the vernal fragrance and effluvia from the flowers and first-fruits of Pantheism, unaware of its bitter root'. Coleridge held back; Wordsworth covered up his Pantheism. But Calvert went almost as far as Taylor himself. Isaac D'Israeli represents Taylor in his novel, *Vaurien*, or *Sketches of the Time*, as 'abstracted from all things and all men', in a watch-tower at the end of his garden, where 'he reads Plato and Homer, and views nothing but the skies'. Taylor believed in sacrifice, and held that animals which are sacrificed, represent 'the irrational life of our souls'. He is said to have 'sacrificed lambs in his lodgings to the "immortal gods" and poured out libations to Jupiter, until his landlord threatened to turn him out'; and in the 1820s it was gossip that he sacrificed a piece of every rumpsteak or chop on his plate to Jupiter.

Much the same kind of thing was said about Calvert in his narrower circle. A. H. Palmer, Samuel Palmer's son, remembered stories of back-garden sacrifices, and Samuel Palmer's godson, Sir William Blake Richmond, stayed with him as a boy: 'it was not without a thrill that I saw in his little back garden an altar erected to the honour of the great god Pan'.

There is a pathos in Calvert's career. He had one of the qualities most scarce in the lives of English painters—a truth to himself, an indifference to the extraneous demands made upon a man's art by fashion and society. He felt there would be no one after Ingres

'to arrest the rapid decadence of painting in Europe', that painting tended 'towards the rankest materialism', that 'amid a feverish production of trifles, there is not even time to remember that there is such a thing as the BEAUTIFUL IDEAL, much less to *meditate upon it*' (1855). He wrote to his son: 'I coveted the mastery over colour, and it has eaten up the bulk of my life'. But if he was true to himself, the self was faulty; and for a painter, that self was never securely enough footed upon earth, to be able to rise with safety into an ideal heaven. He had, while his years were still fresh, his few moments of intercourse between himself and Nature, himself and Blake, himself and Palmer, and then thinned away into his idea.

### III

George Richmond was a much simpler case. He was born four years after Palmer, the son of a miniature painter who made no particular mark, but knew other artists well enough to simplify his son's early progress. Richmond met Blake first of all at the Tatham's house in St. John's Wood. 'Upon leaving late in the evening', according to his son, Sir William Blake Richmond, 'my father asked Blake to permit him to escort him on the way home. . . . The walk continued till my father had made the whole journey from the Regent's Park to the Strand. Upon giving an account of it later, my father said: "I felt walking on air, and as if I had been talking to the Prophet Isaiah".' Through the Tathams and their friend Linnell, no doubt, he met Palmer. Round about 1821 he began his drawing from the antique in the Elgin and Towneley Galleries at the British Museum, where Palmer started work in November 1822. Knowing several R.A.s, he had no difficulty in getting a letter of recommendation to send in with his drawing when he wished to go on to the Royal Academy schools; and there he met with friendship from Fuseli, now very old, 'a small man with a great head covered with a mass of shaggy grey hair, wearing spectacles, and wrapped in a thick blanket', and shuffling about in slippers; and also from the President, Sir Thomas Lawrence. Fuseli invited Richmond and Sidney Cooper and Catterson Smith to his studio to see 'The Lazar House'. Lawrence 'shewed very great favour' to the three of them, and had them round to his house 'to see the drawings that he possessed of Michelangelo, and other great



masters'; but as the Palmer circle gradually established itself, Frederick Tatham, Calvert, and Palmer became his intimates, and Blake their source of light and interpretation. 'Never did he enter Blake's house', he confessed, 'without imprinting a reverent kiss upon the bell-handle which the seer had touched; nor was he alone in this homage, which was practised by all the band of friends'; and Richmond told his friend Joseph Severn, 'I used constantly to go to see Mr. and Mrs. Blake when they lived near Blackfriars Bridge, and never have I known an artist so spiritual, so devoted, so single-minded, or so full of vivid imagination as he. Before Blake began a picture he used to fall on his knees and pray that his work might be successful.' Richmond showed his own things to Blake, and asked for Blake's advice (which was prayer) when he was seized with depression.

Yet, in a sense, George Richmond was scarcely an artist at all, through all his long and successful life. His relations with Palmer were not unlike the relations between Gerard Hopkins and Robert Bridges, who was scarcely a poet at all; although he succeeded publicly, where Hopkins remained obscure. Richmond was a natural Academician: there is no style about his art, early or late. A thinness of drawing, and a hardness of colour mark his religious pictures, his drawings from nature, his landscapes, and his portraits. Entirely without fire (like Robert Bridges), there is in his painting no strong conjunction of belief and observation; and if his early work is liveliest, it is still a repository of other men's ideas and manners, and remains interesting, really, on that account. Historically, if not intrinsically, it deserves exploration and record. His 'Creation of Light' (reproduced in Binyon's *Followers of William Blake*) combines Milton and Blake and John Martin. The text is Milton:

Again the Almighty spake, Let there be lights  
High in the expanse of Heaven, to divide  
The day from night.

The plan is altered from John Martin's mezzotint in his *Paradise Lost*—a plate which was published in 1825. Richmond has reversed the position of the sun and the crescent moon; and in place of Martin's sun inserted a vast rayed orb out of Blake; and in place of Martin's creator, he has borrowed the Adversary from Blake's drawing 'The Baptism', in the *Paradise Regained*

series (which Linnell had acquired in 1825). Blake's figure had been taken from Michelangelo's 'Last Judgement'. But all this, in its lavish blue and green and black, with its moon disc a raised ridge of pigment and its flames from the sun not merely red and gold, but red and real gold—in all this there is only an assembly of elements, not their re-creation. In 'Christ and the Woman of Samaria' in the Tate Gallery Richmond has combined sheep from Blake, corn from Palmer, a Gothic city from Blake, and delicate plants and tree simplifications from Palmer again. He was very young when these pictures were painted, but he matured only into a conventional meagreness. The magic of Blake, of dawns and twilights with Palmer and Calvert and Tatham, the ecstasies and prayers, died out of him soon enough. Richmond was not a mystic; and he had sense enough to realize how he could live and prosper. He was at Blake's deathbed, and actually closed Blake's eyes, and then soon enough started off towards the year 1868: 'Total earned this year £3,469 14s. 6d., the largest income I have ever made'. He became friendly with the right friends at the right early time—Gladstone was one of them. He painted everybody—Wilberforce, Macaulay, Darwin, Thackeray, Harriet Martineau, Cardinal Manning, one portrait differing little in quality from the next. He became a somewhat gloomy slave to principles, a Victorian moralist and 'a pre-Adamite Tory', with a fixed and severe countenance, who never mentioned to his children the fact that he and his wife had eloped, with Samuel Palmer's help, to Gretna Green. And there is a world of social history in comparing a black photograph of him in his Victorian fame with the miniature he painted for his marriage to Julia Tatham in 1831—a miniature of a handsome, large-eyed, dreamy face touched with the delicacy and incompleteness of youth, a miniature of the lips which had kissed Blake's bell-handle—perhaps the most authentic of all his paintings.

He and Palmer kept fairly close all through their lives, but Palmer was strained now and then by fitting ill into the social proprieties of the household of a wealthy mid-Victorian painter—a painter who buttressed the weakness of his imagination by the grim weight of his morality. A. H. Palmer was frequently bitter about Richmond, and stated that he had gone so far as to say to his father that all the years at Shoreham were a waste of

time. Richmond, with his little talent, prospered by compromise; but he was not altogether unfaithful to his youth. After all, he named one of his sons William Blake; and even if he made Palmer feel that he was a success and Palmer a failure, even if he grimly and woodenly rebuked John Giles for leaning over towards Rome, he was at Palmer's bedside when he died, and then wrote down, when he was seventy-five, of Palmer and of Mrs. Richmond: 'Among all the many mercies of my now long life, the friendship of Samuel Palmer and then this early love were, to my poor seeming, the greatest that ever were given to me. God grant that I may never lose the blessedness of acknowledging and remembering them. All Saints Day 1884.' And it is only through the piety of his many descendants that much of the very best of Palmer's work has come down to us; as if Richmond had obscurely felt, after all, that Shoreham genius was more important than Royal Academy success, and had taken care to hand down a family tradition of the visionary excellence of his friend.

## IV

The thing which distinguishes Palmer is not that he belonged to a group of artists, or that he led that group, or that he knew Blake, or that the group had certain peculiarities and tastes, or that it reacted against the movement of the age. All these things and these facts were adjuncts to a unique personality, which they helped to shape and develop. The tastes and nature of Palmer's circle were not at all unique. These young men had grown up in the hard period after the wars, in years of unsettlement, and fear—machine breaking, agitation for reform, the 'Manchester Massacre', the Cato Street Conspiracy, the scandal of Queen Caroline, a season of 'reciprocal distrust' between rich and poor, cruel laws and filth and vile poverty, of an opening breach not only between industrial workers and employers, but between farmers and their men. It was an age of speculation and collapse, of earthquakes actual and social, of 'years of elemental turmoil', in which 'men felt as singular a sense of precariousness—with the globe groaning and heaving under their feet, and meteors flashing and storms rushing about their heads—as we may suppose a race of ants to feel, when man comes with his candle and gun-powder to blow up their settlement'.

And so it was a period in which many good men looked for security either in religion or fanaticism or reaction—the period of Joanna Southcott, of the Holy Land Pilgrims, who sold up their property to go to Jerusalem to meet the Lord, the period of the Reform Bill, and eventually of the Oxford Movement, whose leaders ‘believed they were fighting against the spirit of the age’.

In this medley there were plenty of parallels to the primitivism and Gothicism and intense religious feeling—the ‘excess’—of Palmer and his friends. Other artists—James Ward, for example, were touched by Edward Irving’s prophecies of the end of the world and the second coming, by which Tatham was finally swallowed up and which led him to destroy manuscripts by Blake: ‘God is not to be mocked! The vivid lightnings are gone forth! Farm-house conflagrations. York Minster conflagration, Senate House of Kings, Lords and Commons burnt—“I will overturn! overturn! overturn!” Ezek. xxi. 27. King, Church, Government, and people beware!’ cried James Ward in his pamphlet, *The New Trial of the Spirits*. ‘... We have witnessed the morning, noon and evening, of a gloomy and tempestuous era. We have seen the reign, the triumph, and the downfall of the Great Beast with seven heads and ten horns. ...’

If Palmer reacted violently against the Reform Bill and disapproved of the abolition of the restraints upon Catholics and Dissenters, this reaction was all of a piece with the tastes and peculiarities which helped to form and direct his vision as an artist. And when one thinks of all this in connection with Palmer’s circle, one must think too of the Gothicism of Pugin, of such men as Kenelm Digby and Ambrose Lisle March Phillips de Lisle. De Lisle was born in the same year as George Richmond, a Leicestershire squire’s son who medievalized his name by adding ‘de Lisle’, saw Christ in a dream, and joined the Church of Rome in answer to his rebuke (he was fifteen), and was carried by his guardian angel ‘to old ruined abbeys and churches, where once the praises of God had been sung and souls saved’. Pugin enlarged and ornamented his chapel at Grace-Dieu in which ‘the cantors wore copes of cloth of gold with crimson hoods richly foliated from Pugin’s best designs; the women, medieval hoods or cloaks . . . whilst the acolytes were clothed in scarlet sashes and skull-caps’. De Lisle’s friend was the fantastic medievalist Kenelm Digby, whose *Broad Stone of Honour*, or

*Rules For the Gentlemen of England* (1822), a medievalized handbook to chivalry and duty, drawing on Malory, Froissart, Plato, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Cudworth, Fénelon, etc., went into many editions, influenced the young Disraelian Tories, and is said to be explored still by members of the 'English Mistery'. 'The question', Digby says in the prologue, 'is not whether mankind ought to be influenced by feeling and imagination, but whether these are to be enlisted on the side of religion or against it.'

Such was the atmosphere in which Palmer and his friends became, in Calvert's words, 'brothers in Art, brothers in Love, and brothers in all that for which Love and Art subsist—the Ideal—the Kingdom within'—the atmosphere, in which they wandered in country walks around Sydenham and Dulwich (before Palmer moved to Shoreham), began their monthly meetings, visited the House of the Interpreter, read Milton and Wordsworth and Keats, made their watchword 'Poetry and Sentiment', sketched Gothic buildings, drew each other's portraits, shared a sense of religious awe, meditated upon a pastoral, primitive innocence; and felt with Fuseli, that the pale hands stretching from the tomb in Lieven's 'Raising of Lazarus'<sup>1</sup> were one of the sublimest movements in all the art of mankind. \*

## HOLBROOK JACKSON

# DESIGN AND FUNCTION IN TYPOGRAPHY<sup>2</sup>

IN writing this book it has been Mr. Oliver Simon's intention to put on record the elements and principles of the art he has himself practised so fastidiously and with such distinction, in the hope that his own experience may be of value to others—more especially to those others who are sensitive to design in craft and purpose. Of the value of this intention there can be no doubt, for even the barest details of the methods of so eminent a designer of books must command the most careful attention not only of those connected directly or indirectly with printing but those also who

<sup>1</sup> Now in the Brighton Art Gallery.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to Typography*, Oliver Simon. Faber & Faber, 12s. 6d.



read, write, or distribute books. I emphasize books because *Introduction to Typography* introduces the reader to the typographical designing of books and not to that of printing in general, as the title might imply.

The word 'typography' as we now use it is a recent accession to the terminology of printing, although typographers, as such, that is, printers who were also designers of printing, have existed ever since the fathers of the incunabula took over from the scribes in the fifteenth century. It is the separation of printer from typographer which is new, and requires interpretation, since segregations of the kind are condemned by many who, basing their arguments on a pre-mechanical tradition, see only the degradation of production as well as producer in what is called the 'division of labour'. Printing, both before and after intensive mechanization, has had its good and bad periods, and even in the best periods there has been bad printing. But whatever evils may have followed the division of labour in other industries we have no right to attribute typographical lapses mainly, if at all, to the divorcement of printer and designer of printing. On the contrary, there is some evidence in favour of segregation, especially in recent years, for it is the detached typographer and the typophilic publisher rather than the printer who has inspired the contemporary impulsion towards good printing both in England and America. Generally speaking degenerate printing is due to indifference to design, to lack of taste, to ignorance of a just balance between materials, method, and purpose, and, above all, to the ruthless pursuit of profit at the expense of quality.

It is only within recent years, say the last twenty-five, that printing has learnt how to adjust itself to mechanical conditions which are not so inimical to good taste and sound craftsmanship as was at first imagined. And this happy change has been brought about in spite of (perhaps because of) that division of labour so vigorously condemned by the Arts and Crafts Movement under the powerful influence of John Ruskin and William Morris, both of whom were judges of good printing. By the establishment of the Kelmscott Press in 1891, Morris, indeed, did more than anyone else to restore aesthetic sensibility to the printing arts. The contemporary phase of the revival, as represented by Mr. Oliver Simon, was not, however, the outcome of the neo-medievalism of the Kelmscott books, but of those other

periments by which Morris, using commercial and mechanical processes, produced the admirable first edition of his own romance *The Roots of the Mountains* (1889), which may claim to be the prototype of the influence behind the impulsion towards good printing which has become so generally accepted today.

The modern typographer, or designer of printing, is something more than a printer. He may or may not have practical experience of printing, but as designer he stands apart functioning as arbiter of taste, as keeper of the aesthetic conscience and consciousness of printing. It is not so simple as it looks because in the delicate relationship between function and taste in printing, and especially in the making of a book, there is little room for the play of fancy or imagination, still less of personal posturing. Idiosyncrasy in printing is best when it is least. Mr. Oliver Simon is so well aware of this that he includes on the title-page of his book a quotation from Talbot Reed which charges egotism with being 'responsible for many defects of modern typography'. A certain austerity is imposed upon the typographer from the start, for even genius, when present, is forced to express itself within the limits of materials addicted to fixity of idea and purpose. The principle governing this dainty craft has been stated clearly and concisely by Mr. Stanley Morison in the opening paragraph of his *First Principles of Typography* (1935):

'Typography may be defined as the craft of rightly disposing printing material in accordance with specific purpose; of so arranging the letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text. Typography is the efficient means to an essentially utilitarian and only accidentally aesthetic end, for enjoyment of patterns is rarely the reader's chief aim. Therefore, any disposition of printing material which, whatever the intention, has the effect of coming between author and reader is wrong. It follows that in the printing of books meant to be read there is little room for "bright" typography. Even dullness and monotony in the type-setting are far less vicious to a reader than typographical eccentricity or pleasantry. Cunning of this sort is desirable, even essential, in the typography of propaganda, whether for commerce, politics, or religion, because in such printing only the freshest survives inattention. But the typography of books, apart from the category of narrowly limited editions, requires an

obedience to convention which is almost absolute—and with reason.'

Mr. Oliver Simon associates himself with this principle by quoting Mr. Morison's words, and he makes his intention clear in the opening paragraphs of his *Introduction*. It is to expound by precept and example the method of bringing together in an appropriate design all the materials which go to the making of a book: 'Examination of a well-produced book will show that a successful combination of its main essentials of type-face, composition, margins, paper, presswork and binding forms an harmonious and legible whole. To achieve harmony and legibility is the main object of typography. This needs knowledge, skill and discipline—knowledge of type and traditions of printing—skill to assemble and manipulate the raw materials of book production—discipline to choose imaginatively what is appropriate and consistent.'

Printing is a fortunate craft in that the principle governing one of its most important functions can be stated with so much precision and clarity, and if such statements cannot of themselves determine, still less create, effective design, they do suggest 'terms of reference' for guidance in production and appraisal. A standard of excellence is made possible with ample margin for the legitimate expression of individual taste, or adjustment to particular needs. The governing rule is 'to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text', which puts a severe but necessary check upon any tendency on the part of the typographer to advance design for its own sake. The design of a book is for the reader, and a good design has restraint as well as aptitude, inevitability without familiarity, reticence even to primness being more desirable than heartiness on the one hand, or preciousness on the other. Once the principle of untrammelled contact between the reader's comprehension of text is admitted, some such policy of reticence on the part of the typographer is inevitable, for a book is not a thing in itself but the vehicle of something greater than itself. The typographer has, in fact, to work as firmly within limits as an engineer. A book is a tool, depending for effect upon form rather than ornament, and should be as immune, almost, from decoration as a crowbar or a cartridge.

The frank elucidation of such a principle, with an aesthetic near

to a moral obligation, might imply only bleak and arid results; but that would be contrary to experience. For proof it is only necessary to examine some of the books of the war period which have been produced within the limits of an enforced economy without reduction of utility or elimination of charm. The achievement of such triumphs over sheer austerity would have been unlikely without the guidance of the modern typographer, and the scaling down of materials within the compass of good design shows what can be done (not always what should be done) in normal practice. For what can be done by the genius of typography working within limits we must turn to the achievements of the last three decades of this century. The annual exhibitions of fifty well-printed books convened at first by the First Editions Club and continued by The National Book League have kept an interested public informed about a movement which has demonstrated triumphantly that, provided good taste and good will are present, it is possible to produce books under the exacting conditions of commerce and mechanization which shall at once satisfy the convenience and the sensibility of readers capable of aesthetic response.

Mr. Oliver Simon is one of some half-dozen designers of books who have brought about this condition of typographical well-being and, as their example has attracted the attention of a younger generation of typographers, there are good reasons for supposing that the old rule-of-thumb methods of book production will not be dominant for, at least, some few years. There is a further reason for this hope in the knowledge that the present impulsion towards good printing is not the result of fashion, still less of a sudden and evanescent revolution, but rather of the flowering of a development towards which printing has been fumbling ever since the invention of movable types. Typography—at least so far as books are concerned—is less amenable to the thrusts of evolution than to the shy, almost sly, process of evolution. Book-design being functional is rarely if ever static, proceeding rather than progressing towards adequate expression as opportunity serves. The procedure, so far as fundamental variations are concerned, is exemplified and justified by the acquisition of a continual slight novelty' which varies in emphasis but is often so slight as to seem almost trifling to the inexpert observer.

It is to the credit of the pioneers of the contemporary

typographical movement that they have managed to achieve their aims without recourse to those revolutionary poses and preferences which have teased most of the arts, both 'fine' and 'useful', during the period of unrest through which civilization is passing. Typography has kept its head and instead of rebelling it has progressed towards a clearly imagined climax. Typographers have known what they wanted and gone for it with the minimum of compromise or friction, influencing by example rather than compelling by authority. It has not, however, been plain sailing at all times; a course had to be steered between the shoals of indifference on the part of readers, and the reefs of commercial expediency, which included the established pomposities of 'fine' printing and the bad taste of meretricious brightness. The course on the whole has been happily navigated, and among the successful results of the enterprise which promise well for the future are the discovery of a considerable body of readers capable of response to good taste in printing, and the possibility of producing a beautiful book rather than a 'book beautiful', that is, a book to be read and not a museum piece.

The typographer has, in short, conquered both pococurantism and pomposity (those enemies of good taste) by the fusion of idiosyncrasy with design and function. Form, not ornament, is the test and the result can best be summed up as style. This is fortunate for if style suspects originality it recognizes variety, and the emphasis of the new movement at such a time might easily have been laid upon a standard with efficiency at the prow and monotony at the helm, which would have been the negation of all style. 'That exquisite something called Style' is as like and as indefinable in the designing as in the writing of a book, 'which', says James Russell Lowell, 'can be felt rather than defined, like the grace of perfect breeding, everywhere pervasive and nowhere emphatic, makes itself felt by the skill with which it effaces itself, and masters us at last with a sense of indefinable completeness'. Grace and charm, as well as 'fitness for purpose', are native to the new typography, to be interpreted according to the taste and temperament of the designer. The best printing offices and publishing houses, even in bad periods, have maintained characteristics of their own, and if their books have tended towards uniformity of style, they have rarely betrayed their trust. The arrival of the typographer helps towards removing otiose



uniformity, for typographers, however much they may have triumphed over mannerism, have recognizable styles like painters or poets, like the *couturiers* of the Rue de la Paix or the tailors of Savile Row. Oliver Simon has performed a service by revealing to young printers the ingredients of his own style, not for imitation—it is too individual for that—but as an example for other styles as yet in the making. But there is no call for admonition: a good style is inimitable, an inspiration towards individual expression rather than mimesis; and that is the supremely useful purpose which *Introduction to Typography* will serve.

As might be expected the volume is well designed and, for these days, opulently produced. Mr. Simon's technique is revealed more in the illustrations than in the text, so that any young typographer or printer will find sufficient raw material of vintage quality among the reproductions of type-faces, ornaments and layouts in this slender and gracious primer to set him on his way towards mastery of an ancient and honourable craft. But the value of such a book is not solely technical. That it will appeal to printers is self-evident, but it should prove of equal benefit as a criterion of taste to all who approach printing for professional or business purposes and to those numerous folk for whom books are necessary and familiar tools for culture or recreation.

BERNARD GUTTERIDGE

## PORTRAIT OF A TOWN

THE town of Bombay is built on an island that claws to the mainland by an artificial causeway. I write to you as someone who lives on that island for some of the time, and for the rest crosses to the mainland and goes ripping up the road for the next European-type resting place or playing place he can find. Our life is constricted just like that: it is unimaginably difficult to get off the road and see the India beyond the lines of traffic. To begin with, you must learn the language; secondly, you must have the time; thirdly, you want to be without the measured tread of the Army dogging your footsteps. What you are going to get is something of what the thousands of British soldiers and airmen

have seen during these last six years. It would be impertinent to try to give you more. So consider yourself a member of one of the services, a number, getting off the boat. You had better be an officer, or you won't have enough money to see much more than the canteens or the cinemas.

First, the docks. Flotsam on a greater scale than the black miniatures of ships seen as broken planking that twist in the grey foam at the water's edge; the wheedling gulls; third engineers in over-brief white shorts; thousands of coolies marked with brass plaques that dangle round their necks. Then beyond the docks the taxi takes you past the rich shiny buildings that always lie between the harbour and the sea in any port: the banks, I.C.I., Grand Hotel, the insurance houses, the wine merchants, the tea merchants, the cotton palaces. Two minutes of shops, with a cinema and a Chinese restaurant, and you are whisked up to Bombay's hotel, the Taj Mahal, which is just as ugly and overpowering as you had expected it would be when you saw its vast bulk rising from the smaller buildings as the ship moved in. But what a safe base it is! Just like the Regent Palace, and you can scurry out again in a taxi to see what you can find, with your line of retreat well covered. Up Hornby Road, where all the big shops are, wide and clean, flowering with soldiers, students and babus—many people, all in white clothes, a lot wearing white congress hats. Leading from this centre of shops for tourists, book shops, camera shops and cinemas are the meaner streets, streets that begin to cater for the Indian and not the European or the Europeanized Indian. Here you first get that full impact with another life that can be so disturbing. The super cars of the steel millionaires hoot at the thin sacred cows that dawdle about in the centre of the roads; the street vendors sell sweets and bidis; cheap saris and blue and red checked gingham lie in bright folds in the draper's shop. Here you will begin to pick up your skirts with disgust at new, disquieting vulgarities you've never met before. There are the brick-red gaps of mouths salivating betel juice, and the people incessantly clearing their throats with bubbling gerks and gobbing on the asphalte. The Muslim and Hindu youths yowl and curse at each other.

All the time the sun is shining, shadows are like black rivers, and hot, weird, stinking strangeness is about you all the time. Empty windows, veiled carriages, old men, playing children, are

ll aware of you and note you down—you, the impotent, stupidly dressed, white-faced invader stumbling along alleyways and understanding nothing. Why are you so placed that you must step over the man with elephantiasis lying on the pavement, his leg like a gross swollen trunk lately recovered from a dog? Careful walker as you are, how is it you knock into the woman nursing her child, a great two-year-old brat that looks up at you with understanding, mocking eyes while fastened to the sack-like dug? You have not bought anything, you are acutely uncomfortable with the beginnings of prickly heat idgeting your shoulders and your belly. You will have to about-turn and go back to the hotel for a gin. But the acquisitive habit of the traveller cannot be subdued and you may go to the Kashmir shop and buy a housecoat for your wife or a carved wooden cigarette box for your father. For yourself a copy of the Oxford Book of Light Verse from the hotel book counter, although your travelling cases are full of books already; and, anyway, you still have the copy you bought at Port Said. If you can, you must lunch at the Yacht Club; you have to know a member or be a major and upwards. Lobster and excellent salad, with good South African wine. After lunch take your cigar and go up to the reading room on the top floor. There you will find the kind of chair to be found in all clubs in India. It is long and cane bottomed, with two extensions to the arms that swing out and make leg rests. As you enter the room you are met by twenty pairs of soles, twenty papers and twenty thin blue lines of cigar smoke spiralling up to be broken and dispersed by the throbbing fans that hang from the ceiling. Soon the papers will fold down on to the faces of the old men, like early lettuces being protected from the frost, and they will sleep. Sleep until tea.

Suddenly, between tea and bath, between bath and gin, one Bombay goes and another arrives. Night blots out the tawdry, viciously ugly buildings and the sad dwelling places; cools the streets; softens the sea and decks the stream with a parish of lights where day held stinking trawlers. The evening laps along until ten o'clock, when the bars close and only the brothels can supply you with a drink. Then follows the drive through the sexy refulgence of the mysterious house lights on the hard shiny leaves and the sickly sweet warm copper-held cooking smells.

The place you are going to is called 'The House under the Bridge'. The high thin noises of Bombay night—the bright needle of life thrust in the marrow of the thigh bone. All these quicken and excite the sense that presses like a sharp stone in your belly. The gharri ride takes a long time. You are never certain that the horse and driver will not lead you aside to a dark cul-de-sac where you will be beaten, stripped and robbed. In the back streets all you hear is the beating of the horse's hooves like the seashells and pebbles that once spilled on to the mahogany table. The creak of the wheels and the froth of wind among the branches mingle with the moving and breathing of your companion beside you. A lustrum away is the cheap European nastiness of an hotel bar and the shelves packed with gin, cachou nuts on blue saucers, soldiers, Wrens, shifty-eyed business men, the next round. Where is the 'Gents'? What shall the pianist play? Darling, you *must* have six. On you go. The Chinese girl's bare stomach is golden suède, she wears a quaker-white gardenia in her black hair. . . .

An incident of Bombay, a rare talk with an old, thin, cultured Indian lawyer and his eighteen-year-old daughter, but a talk which stopped where all these talks seem to. Nothing, they said, matters—famine, murder, civil war, fascism, the destruction of art . . . as long as the country is ours to rule; let it be *our* famine to control and *our* dacoity. If the Hindus go to succour an oppressed minority in Pakistan and the Muslims do the same to us and there is a great war and forty million people die, what of it? It will be our war, and we shall be moving towards our peace and our country. We can spare forty million people for that.

One hundred and twenty miles from Bombay is Poona; and seventy miles beyond Poona is the small hill station of Mahableshwar, four thousand feet up in the Mahratta Ghats. From June until October the rain seldom ceases and the red gravel roads shift under the widening, ever-spattered pools. Red rivers run winding past the sleek wet black trunks of the evergreens and the empty marble-pillared bungalows of rich Parsees. We drove up in jeeps on one Sunday in July because we could not wait until October to see the Ghats again. But the rain hit us at two thousand feet and we could see little but the swimming road in front of us. We stopped for boiled eggs and Scotch at an

hotel made of corrugated iron. All the time the rain beat on the roof as if the entire skies of India were being emptied of all Fate's nuts and bolts. But in October we drove in splendid sunshine all the way along a good road, straight in the valleys and twisting like a lariat up the Ghats. This is what is so exciting about India: the hard, sun-cleaned view when the country lies just below you to your hand for hundreds of miles. A salt-white temple and its black shadow stand out like cubes from ten miles away; fissures on the rock face across the gorge are as clearly vivid as the winter branches of blackthorn in a green field. These hills are our idea of the mountains of the moon, they are so divorced of any life but the hard existence of stones and ageless laking of boulders. Many peaks have temples or strongly walled forts right on the summit, so much part of the heights they seem, that they might be part of the purpose of the mountains themselves. Driving around in the Mahratta Ghats in our bush hats, shirts and shorts, it is difficult to imagine Wellington methodically storming and reducing the walled villages with his band of red-coated, overburdened soldiers; his worry as the claret ran out.

We stayed in the club, where there was as much drink as we wanted and cream and honey for porridge each morning (later there will be large round bamboo baskets of strawberries and raspberries). A library with a collection of frightful books, Victorian lady novelists and exploits on shikar or in provincial governorship. Every day an old man slept on the veranda. Beyond him the massive hills, their lower slopes tightly curled with trees, the vast dips between the peaks. Nearer, the green of the golf course; beside him, to please his age's sense of flowers when he awoke, were larkspur, creamy roses and a wild flower like comfrey.

Sunshine whose gift is the barbaric grace of life that is allowed to grow within it. The orange and purple pugris of two bullock drivers in white moving along a blazing empty road. Humans are the colours, but not the drab Europeans whose hands stray fearfully towards the clash, who find the scarlet canmas overpowering or the oleanders by the grey stones of a well. Race-meetings, with their fragile horses and silks like brilliants, are always attractive for these two things. At the Poona races most beautiful women, in sumptuous clothes, blazoned with jewellery, defeat them. Imagine a white clubhouse with white railings,



Irish green grass, a paddock among trees. And, behaving more gracefully than anyone else in the world, the gorgeous young rich Indian girls in fabulous silk saris move like sunflowers in the sunshine. We move about among them, hobbledehoy in khaki, with ugly hard voices, scurfy moustaches and impudent elbowing and a way of appropriation. At Mahableshwar we had the four red walls about us; here the hedge and the white railings, the police and the hulking feet of the Europeans. Beyond is the city of Poona.

It is a very politically conscious town and the hundreds of students, in between ruthless bouts of gobbling down textbooks, chalk slogans for each other. When Subhas Chandra Bose was killed they chalked up: 'Boycott classes today, Bose is dead'. That was one of my frequent days when I think the Indians are the most bloody minded people on the earth's surface and I think, let them go to pot and kill each other and blast it, now *I'll* lose my temper with them after always doing my best to understand. Bose did his best to kill a lot of Britishers and delightful Indian sepoys only to be lauded to the skies by this scum. Hurrah for 'Mow 'em down Dwyer!' I get over that as you should get over a burst of temper—but nearly half of the visitors to India who get out of troopships don't get over it. The students' immediate aim is matriculation; and those who fail to pass demonstrate against the examiners. Beyond the students the poor women stand in queues for hour upon hour, waiting for oil—or grain from an unfriendly chandler; or scratch manure from the streets to light cooking fires. Crowds round the station or the street vendors' wicker tables or the godowns are expectant, pleading, voluble, boastful, frightened, desiring many things, scrounging, always on the make, fettered by religion, forced to cheat, on the edge of starvation (the pitiable cadaverous corpses lying like dog-shit in Calcutta gutters in the winter of '43 looked like the pictures from Belsen, yet people in Bombay said, how awful, when they saw what the Germans had done). The groggy tonga ponies carry the subalterns and the Q.A.s to swim in the pool at the Poona Club, and the flabby young Indian Maharajah backs his cousin's horse to win the four-thirty for five hundred pounds. The gold and silver saris drift on the lawn.

'When I was in Poona.' I've spent most of my Indian service

in Poona, you know. Before we went to Burma and when we came back. First, we were in a raw hutted camp, and then, when we came back, in the Aga Khan's Palace. First trailing through the mud and across rivers, and through the bristly undergrowth, for the war we were going to; then celebrating our return with the soft life of oyster and pigeon pie and Scotch at the supper dances. You would like to see me in the Aga Khan's Palace, a hideous affair in marble and stucco just out of the town. Gandhi was imprisoned here and his wife died here. Her grave is in the garden. I sleep in the bedroom the Mahatma occupied. Occasionally people whom the batmen call 'Congress Wallahs' come in to see the room or stand by her grave. We talk about Gandhiji; and they are always pleasant and courteous people. My squash racquet, Philip's gay shirts, Brian's vivid pyjamas lie about the room. A bottle of gin stands on the card table in the centre of the carpet; a pair of bulbuls has built in the chandelier; the young are growing up now and copies of the *Times of India* lie all over the floor to catch their droppings. What? From the roof you look down and see the gardeners busy about the flower beds and realize that this is the place from which to see the garden. The beds are all clovers, circles and diamonds among the gravel, and all bedded out in different colours. To the south the white buildings of the Towers of Silence where the Parsees leave their dead on an iron grille for the vultures. The vultures hang about in the trees like ropes of rotting purple black poisonous fruits. They are content to wait. Eventually the trees will shake and the black beads will float above them and wheel in drooling lazy flight to the towers to settle down around the thin old sacrificed body. Beyond the sailing club, by the side of the Muttha River, are the Burning Ghats, where the Hindus burn their dead, squatting by the slowly charring body, popping twigs and bits of paper in to keep the fire going.

To the north-west is a grey smudge on the yellow earth that is the camp of coolies, living where they work, building a hospital. When you drive up to the smudge it resolves into a thousand small huts wedged together over two acres of stony, dusty ground, with no road near it and no shade from the pulverizing sun. Each hut houses mother and father and the children. The hut is made of sacking, rusty old bits of corrugated iron, leaves, grasses. The holes are wedged with mud

or bits of filthy cloth. When the monsoon comes it is never dry inside and the floor is permanently soggy. The hut is four feet high, six feet long and five feet broad. Outside the huts the women squat dressed in the rags of blue or maroon saris kneading the bullock manure into flat cakes and setting them in the sun to dry. Other women and men are carrying rubble in baskets on their heads to build the foundations of the hospital. As they run with their loads—it is often that staggering run you cannot help when you are carrying something too heavy—you can see the strained, overburdened look in their faces, the quivering sinews in their necks. A thick smell of human faeces, manure, cooking oils, bullocks, floats among the hutment as disease, unseen, does also. There has never been a visitor to India who was not shocked by the continent-wide repetition of sights like this. There was never a wartime soldier coming inland from Bombay who was not horrified and ashamed as the train passed such an encampment. It sprawls not far from the station. By it there is a dump of lorries, cars, trailers for use in the war: all clean, yellow and well tended. That, I suppose, is the memory that will stick above all others. Beyond the grace of the rich women in their dahlia clothes; beyond the telescoping brilliance of the sunshine and the hard black of the shadows; beyond the rich friendly life of the market; the dead forts that have grown out of the hills and are now part of them, like wood carved into wood; the urgent slogans of the students and the quiet, bitter arguments with friends; the wonderful feeling of physical relief as the monsoon breaks and the rain calms the hot earth and all your life is green and glowing in a few hours; dawn by a grey huddle of temple, old walls and wells that is a village already awake with prowling dogs and the clatter of drums; high noon in May when the rocks burn your hands as you scramble up hill—and the rocks turned over, the underneath is not damp or even cool; the four-year-old herding goats; the festival of lights; the copper bowls; the drawings of Krishna in the buses. . . . Beyond these the cholera-haunted millions in their foul homes of dirt and rag; that camp by the army trucks:

‘ . . . that our daughters  
Be fit to love the earth, and not again  
Disgraced before the dogs’.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*Three.* By William Sansom. Hogarth Press. 8s. 6d.

*A Journey to the Interior.* By P. H. Newby. Jonathan Cape. 9s. 6d.

*It May Never Happen.* By V. S. Pritchett. Chatto & Windus. 8s. 6d.

THREE books by three artists. And not a clever journalist among them. What an unusually lucky catch!

Two of these artists, Mr. Sansom and Mr. Newby, have something in common, they are both writers of allegory.

Mr. Sansom first. Perhaps the best story here is 'The Cleaner's Story'. It is an elaborate, lyrical and highly original performance. We are shown the life of a French provincial town through the eyes of a being who is down on her knees scrubbing a café floor. She starts scrubbing at eleven o'clock, and at one she knocks off for luncheon, and the story is done. During those two hours, we are shown, through the complicated trellis-work of this charwoman's soul, the birth and death of a provincial scandal, which includes wild dreams of murder, deformity and rape. But the cleaner's soul is travelling off at the same time on a pilgrimage of its own, a search is going forward in it for a Faith. Using the events at the café to point her arguments (moral, and metaphysical too) she gives, as the tale goes on, an exposition of her sense of values and her philosophy.

When all this has been said—still no impression of Mr. Sansom's story is given whatsoever. And to tell the truth, it is as difficult to catch hold of this author's texture, to expound his spiritual pyrotechnics, as it would be to put salt on the tails of a great herd of unicorns and fireflies—should one ever endeavour so to do. Yet as a matter of fact Mr. Sansom's individual gift does lie, not in the plots of his allegorical tales, but indeed in their texture. That is to say, in the flickering of his poetical green fingers, which have only to point to our platitudinous everyday things—boots and shoes, railway trucks, dirty tea-cups, luxury flats, bits of grey fluff off the floor—to make them at once stir in their profound sleep, sit up, grimace and chirrup, come unexpectedly clattering at us—or sing *arias* in the grand manner, perhaps discourse on metaphysical points, wrestle and dance, sing beautiful love-songs—and disappear again like the famous spectre, with a perfume and a most melodious twang. (Such green blood ran also in the veins of Strindberg and Maeterlinck. And by the same token I should much like to see Mr. Sansom attempt a play.)

The second story in this book, 'Cat up a Tree', is short, told with great verve and is simply delicious—a day in spring. Always the *mot juste* here, even down to what lies beneath a pussy-cat's tail.

With the last story, 'The Invited', we go another long spiritual pilgrimage. Again we have one Hero-soul, who is searching for the right way of life, and again a flock of elegant accompanying Marionettes. This soul, however, comes from a block of luxury flats, and his journey of exploration takes place in a darkly mysterious land—the Railway Marshalling Yards—below them. There are many beautiful passages of poetical writing in this. The great block of luxury flats awakening for its evening life against the dying sun is one; the dead moonlight in the marshalling yards too; and the virtuoso description of the

progress of the lovers' afternoon, as they lie together in the chiaroscuro of the railway bank, with its incendiary reds and melancholy gilt.

The trouble about flying around in these altitudes—where systems and ideas of elusive outline float belling in between us and the little figures down below—is that it soon grows cold up here. I feel that Mr. Sansom should have arranged, at any rate in the second half, for the journey to seem less long, and to have avoided the impression that we are sometimes flying round and round in rings.

Mr. Newby is a new author. A thinker and an artist of force, he has the gift of being able—in the shortest of short, dry sentences—to strike at one and get one in the vital spot. He tells his story with a sort of steely, muscular sureness and power. And he gets us, where he means to get us, fair and square (in his allegorical way) below the belt.

The story is about Love, or rather, the lack of it. And when it starts, the hero, Winter, is ill. He is ill physically, for he is recovering from typhoid, and he is ill emotionally. (And it is in this duality of condition, physical and emotional, that Mr. Newby's particular force lies.) Winter is ill spiritually because his young wife, with whom he is in love, has died. The point is that Winter has not been able to assimilate the death. It is not real to him. So that a blockage occurs in his emotional life, and between him and living a barrier has now been thrown. Here we feel Mr. Newby is writing about a central problem of life: that of harnessing the senseless dynamo of the heart—as harnessed it must somehow be—to those realities which torture it, and which it loathes.

All that the author tells us officially is that Winter comes for a holiday after his typhoid to this tropical port. That he comes in an advisory capacity to the European officials of the oil-well there. That it is a place of burning aridity, and of blinding sun; and of how the officials and their wives sit about in deck-chairs on their bungalow verandas, give cocktail parties, do business, and so on. Nevertheless, in spite of the blazing tropical daylight, this is really yet another dark Wizard's land; and among the deck-chairs, around the rocks, on the Quai, behind the glass-topped office tables, and over the uncomfortable camp beds, the air thickens with a pervading sense of a secret, locked-away life; and something that comes from a spectral cline whispers everywhere over the sunny scene. So that it is not long before we see that this, too, is a counterfeit country, deriving from inside the mind.

One hesitates to try to pin down baldly the meaning of this kind of book. And here particularly, where the significance is so closely married to the tune, perhaps one should not attempt—as Mr. Day Lewis puts it—to construe it with a key. Yet it does seem that Winter's final arrival in the empty interior of his tropical land corresponds to his perception of the wife's death as a reality at last. For not until after his return, at the end, from the whitening bones of the desert, can Winter—but why give away the plot? At any rate this book rouses many echoes, half heard in the tropical dusk; this fable of a once-loved person who is real no longer, but who nevertheless continues to steal the emotions of the living, and imprison them in her land of death.

Now that we have got these two Wizards in Modern Dress, Mr. Newby and Mr. Sansom, up together, it is tempting to compare them. Mr. Sansom's people are Significant Forms. Mr. Newby's, though strangers from first to last, are



esh and blood—we smell their perspiration, and flinch at their predicament. Mr. Sansom's iridescent eye roves simply everywhere. Mr. Newby's seems to turn a hole through the arid spot on which he stands. The fact is Mr. Newby is a sort of spiritual boxer, has been in training for weeks, permitted only raw steaks (and never even a cigarette), so that with the merest flick of a finger we crumple up. Mr. Sansom, forever listening to the babel of weird and eloquent voices around him in the air, never gets a clean blow in like that. But then again some people might prefer, by way of occupation, to sally forth of an evening and mingle in Petrouchka's fair, rather than stand in the ring, on the sawdust, and be cut at on a boiling afternoon.

The art of Mr. Pritchett needs no introduction here. It is very hard to pick out the favourite tales. They change—as one's moods towards different people change—from day to day. 'The Sailor' is, of course, dazzling. But then so is 'The Chestnut Tree'. Certainly I remember putting 'Aunt Gertrude' first the other day. But 'It May Never Happen' itself is really the best, perhaps, with its wonderful, terrible Uncle Belton. To read this writer is to perk up and thoroughly enjoy oneself. Why? For many reasons. But one thing, anyway, is that Mr. Pritchett does such a lot of hard thinking for us, and never asks us to sit pegging away alone, holding our heads.

Unlike the two painters of landscape-with-figures discussed above, Mr. Pritchett is a single-hearted portrait-painter. All his poetry, imaginative force, his fantasy, and intellect—everything—is focused upon the human face. Let us walk down the gallery and look at the pictures there. At first glance it seems as if we were among quite ordinary folk. But after the second and third glance at this gallery of portraits—at the women with their hair done up like tea-cakes, perfuming the air with their smells of groceries and ink, and at the bowler-hatted men skating over thin ice and volcanoes, looking out at us in secret agony from somewhere inside the dark puffs round their eyes—after the second glance at these, we begin to see them in their true colours, as almost mythological urban images, shimmering, paradoxically bizarre, the products of an original poet's mind. Take a look at those eyes, noses, and stomachs. 'He' (the Sailor) 'was a greasy looking man, once fat, and the fat had gone down unevenly like a deflating bladder' . . . and 'He was looking at me from his bilious eyes, like a man drowning and screaming for help in two feet of water' . . . Again: 'She (Grandma Carter) came in in her black bead bonnet, her red nose, and the red-rimmed eyes staring like knife cuts through her black veil.' Again here are two men going to the pub. 'The headlights of cars howling through the dark to the coast picked out two balloons in coats and trousers, bouncing and blowing down the road.' This one's eyes above the lumps of fat on his cheeks look like sinking lights at sea. That one's ears are pushed out of shape by his bowler hat.

But meanwhile we have passed the clue. You will have noticed that the sailor looks out 'from his bilious eyes'. Here is the point. The souls in Mr. Pritchett's book are somehow struggling, spirited swimmers, trapped in the unmanageable uprearing currents, and engulfed in the violent shapes of a storm-ridden ocean of flesh. On top of this living ocean floats all the paraphernalia of their civilization—their string bags, their typewriters, their gun-metal fenders, their bowler hats, forming a gigantic

close-tissued raft upon the waves. And from under and around this raft, and between it and the waves, the human beings themselves, the real creatures, peep slyly out. They are steering busily for home, uttering philosophical cracks and artful dicta, manipulating their top-heavy raft in the waves with valiance and aplomb.

My favourite story is really 'Mr. Pocock Passes'. The tale of a friendship between two entrancing human balloons: Rogers, the speculative builder from the village, and Pocock, the mysterious artist from London.

In the opening paragraph we at once get a taste of Mr. Pritchett's Imagination, as opposed to mere fancy—in Coleridge's definition of the term:

'The Cities fall, but what survives? It is the common, patient, indigenous grass. After Mr. Pocock's death this thought lay in a muddle in Rogers's mind; if Rogers had a mind. He was enormously fat; a jelly-fish which is washed and rocked by sensations and not by thought. The Wilcoxes, the Storks and Rogerses, the three ordinary, far-back tribes who made the village, alone had history; and this plain corporate history, like the eternal grass, choked out the singular blooms. The death of a Rogers is something. A card is shuffled into another pack and he joins the great phalanx of village Rogerses beyond the grave, formidable in their anonymity. But the death of a stranger like Pocock, who had been in the place only a few months, was like a motor smash. Vivid but trivial, it sank out of village memory to the bottom of time.'

Pocock, the fat painter from London, makes his first appearance in this village during the 'crisis', and characteristically, at the village pub. There the enormous Rogers, also a heavy drinker, first meets him. 'There is a loneliness in fat. Atlas met Atlas, astonished to find each saddened by the burden of a world.' Yet both these men, Mr. Pritchett seems to show us, have deliberately taken refuge from their misfortunes and from the world by receding, removing themselves out of contact, inside their ever-growing alcoholic fat. After a wonderfully funny and poetical scene in the bar parlour, the two men get up and go out. Then comes the revelation. 'I don't mind telling you, old boy, I've been hurt,' Mr. Pocock says. 'I haven't told a bloody soul so far, but I'll tell you. *Last year I started living on my capital.*' Rogers also is in the same predicament! Both have passed the crest of the hill, and are secretly travelling down. 'After this, day by day, they sought each other out like two dogs.'

Like all the characters in the book, the two unfortunates (or black sheep, whichever way you look at it) have each invented a *patois*, debonair and protective, of their own. And it is somewhere here, on this point in the human being, that Mr. Pritchett's eye seems to focus. On this point where the self-conscious, hopeful dream of himself and the contrary stresses and strains beneath, meet. It is at this point that the personality is brought to birth; that fascinating, priceless contribution to the human scene. The Russian writers, Turgenyev, Chekov, brought the art of painting the uniqueness of personality to a high finish. And Dickens, of course, was busily at work before them. But now, today, writers who can bring this thing off, produce recognizable personalities in this way—whole galleries full of them, as Mr. Pritchett can—are very, very rare indeed.

JULIA STRACHEY.

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